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THE CASE FOR EPISCOPACY

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# THE CASE FOR EPISCOPACY

BY  
KENNETH D. MACKENZIE

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## PREFACE

THIS little book does not profess to deal with the problem of reunion as such. It aims rather at concentrating attention on one of the subjects which must be studied before we are in a position to deal with reunion at all. We cannot attack the question of the possibility of reunion between episcopal and non-episcopal communities until we have both acquired sufficient information on the subject of episcopacy in general, what it is, what it might be, and why we should want it, and also done some hard thinking on this information when acquired. The aim of this book has been to supply the information to those who are prepared to do the thinking, and to lay it before them as fully and fairly as possible. There are, of course, great books on the subject already in existence. But at a time when reunion will soon be the subject of every kind of ecclesiastical gathering, from the Lambeth Conference downwards, it is necessary to provide for the needs, not only of those who are prepared to read formidable volumes, but also of those who only wish to be informed of the salient facts. To plunge into controversy about reunion without understanding why this matter of episcopacy is so vital to some of us is to be blind to one of the real points at issue.

The author may perhaps hope that his book will fall into the hands of some members of the non-episcopal churches, who may be charitably anxious to consider, at moderate length, what is to them a merely paradoxical position. If he is so fortunate as to obtain such readers, they will not, he trusts,

consider it impertinent in him to venture to underline a few points, for which he desires to bespeak their attention.

First, he has honestly tried to give due weight to all that is urged *against* the necessity of episcopacy. It is his desire that Episcopalian readers should be familiar with these arguments, not merely in order that they may have their stock answer ready, but also that they may not forget that there are two sides to this as to every other question.

Secondly, he has not taken up the position that everyone is wrong except the Anglican Communion. Such a view seems to him profoundly pessimistic. He holds that the Divine Providence has permitted the evil of separation in preference to the greater evil of the suffocation of partial truths and the stereotyping of imperfect developments.

Thirdly, and in consequence, his desire is for the inclusion of ideals. No doubt when ideals are contradictory you cannot include them. Thus he confesses that the ideals of a consistent Congregationalism do seem to him to be in the long run incompatible with those of episcopacy. Bishop Headlam, of Gloucester, has recently stated that "almost every American is, in his heart, a Congregationalist."<sup>1</sup> The author is far from wishing to endorse so remarkable a statement, but the truth of which this is a humorous exaggeration would certainly explain the fact that, according to the Bishop, many of the American Protestant representatives at Lausanne "resented, or appeared to resent, any interest being taken in" the matters of Faith and Order which were being discussed. It seems, then, as though the Congregationalist could only be asked to think again, and ask himself whether some things excluded by his specific ideals are not really valuable, or even vital, to the Kingdom of God.

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul's Review*, August, 1929.

But that does not in the least apply to Methodism as such, still less to Presbyterianism. Methodists and Presbyterians accepting episcopacy are not contradicting, but fulfilling, their own ideals, and enriching ours, not watering them down. The Methodists went into schism rather than settle down to the idea of a divorce between the ministration of the sacraments and the preaching of the word, as though one required a duly appointed minister, and the other did not. The Presbyterians have maintained the dignity of the presbyteral ministry, and have recently, with marvellous success, vindicated the freedom of a Church which is established. In the event of reunion, we want to take in and assimilate the whole of what is distinctively good in those with whom we are uniting—the whole Presbyterian system, that is, from Kirk Session to General Assembly, and the whole force and fire of that preaching which is the glory of Methodism. Conversely, it seems to many of us that the mere acceptance of episcopal government does not deserve to be called episcopacy. The episcopal Orders which we desire to share with all other orthodox Christians are not merely a ministry directed by bishops, but a ministry derived, as we believe, through bishops from our Lord Himself.

The author desires to express his gratitude to those who have helped him with advice or information, particularly to the Right Rev. C. Gore, D.D., the Rev. D. Stone, D.D., the Rev. W. K. Lowther Clarke, D.D., the Rev. C. Harris, D.D., and the Rev. J. E. MacRae.



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# THE CASE FOR EPISCOPACY

## CHAPTER I

### AN APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

THERE is a story of a rather dour Evangelical who conscientiously declined to rise from his seat when the clergyman came in to conduct a service. "I don't stand up when my servants come into the room," he said. If we will compare that with a picture of an enthusiastic Catholic kneeling at the bishop's feet and kissing his ring, we shall have an illustration, clear enough, though no doubt somewhat exaggerated, of two contrasted attitudes to the Christian ministry.

No doubt both Evangelicals and Catholics (using both words conventionally and, as the lawyers say, "without prejudice") can teach each other something about the true way of regarding the ministry: but it seems that before we can enter on a profitable discussion as to the nature of episcopacy—that is to say, a discussion of ministerial authority—we must try to understand what the ministry is.

A minister is a servant: that is the meaning of the word. It is acknowledged on all sides that he owes service to the general body of the Church.<sup>1</sup> It is also fairly generally acknowledged that the minister, when once he has been accepted as such, is in a special sense also the servant of God. He deals authoritatively with the people in his Master's name, and in their name offers to God a special and distinctive service.

<sup>1</sup> The Pope himself is described as "Servant of the servants of God."

Ministry, then, means a special service both to God and man. That is agreed. But at this point we begin to diverge. There are certain questions to which there is no agreed answer. What is this service to God? What is this service to man? What is the nature of the authority which such service demands?

I. What, then, is the service which the Christian ministry offers to the lay members of the Church? A recent book<sup>1</sup> has well pointed out that much modern teaching suggests that the way of salvation is merely a matter of getting people to realise certain ideas, and that there is a great difference between this and the traditional conviction that salvation is an act of God. According to such modern teaching, for instance, the Incarnation would mean that we must realise in the crucial instance of Jesus Christ that we may all become more or less divine. The Atonement would mean that we must realise that love is the supreme thing in life, and that sin is that which contradicts love. This is, of course, to take rather extreme cases, but it is not unfair to say that the tendency of much modern theological thought is to place an enormous emphasis on getting people to realise ideas. If that were all, it would follow that the Christian ministry is a ministry of ideas. It must proclaim, testify, argue, and persuade. It must also, if the ideas are to be Christian ideas, point to Christ as the Person who supremely realised and lived them. If that is the sole function of the ministry, it is clear that all questions of authority and commission are secondary. The qualifications for such a ministry are intellect, personality, character, insight. Even in so far as its work is to point to Christ, the coming of the King can be realised as clearly by the shouts of the members of the crowd as by the trumpets of the official herald. So far as testimony is concerned,

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Baker, *The Gospel and Modernism*.

character is the best credential of a witness. If, on the other hand, Christianity is the application to the soul of the saving acts of Christ, then at once the authority of the living agent who is to administer them becomes primary. Personal endowments are only valuable as securing acceptability for the minister. This applies to preaching as much, or almost as much, as to any other means of grace. So far as preaching is the mere releasing of ideas, the personality and intellectual equipment of the preacher are the important things. But if preaching is the message of God, then what we chiefly want to know is the authority of the preacher. If he is an inspired man, then, of course, *cadit quæstio*: we can only bow our heads and listen to his message. But, apart from such exceptional conditions, we are surely right in asking what authority he has behind him. If he is merely to read the Bible to us, well and good: anyone can do that. But if he is doing more than this, it really is important to know by whose authority we are to accept him as an accredited preacher of the truth. This is not to prejudice the question. We may come to the conclusion that the most satisfactory authority is that of the congregation to whom he is ministering. They have recognised the man of God, and that is sufficient. Or we may, with some show of reason, think that we must each judge for ourselves whether what he is saying is saving truth or human fancy, and that the fact that it is delivered by a preacher in a pulpit gives it no additional authority at all. In that case his authority is simply that we individually accept what he says, or some of it, as from God. No doubt something of this spirit must colour our attitude to all preaching. "Let the others discern,"<sup>1</sup> is St. Paul's advice even in regard to inspired prophecy. It is not clear, he seems to say, that all that the prophet says is equally inspired. Yet it makes a vast differ-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 29.

ence to our attitude if we think that the preacher, however feeble, has the authority of an Apostolic commission to proclaim salvation. The very foolishness of his preaching may perhaps be part of the Divine plan for the saving of the world, and we shall expect what he says to be an instrument of salvation, and shall think that it is either his fault or ours if there seems to be no "gospel" in his message.

If this is true about preaching, it is more obviously true about those other means of grace, the sacraments. If they are merely psychological devices, the object of which is to lubricate the mind and facilitate the entrance of ideas, it is not worth while to enquire what authority there is behind the ministers of them. Clearly it does not matter. The only question is: "Do they induce the desired state of mind?" But if grace means far more than a state of mind, then again we need to know what kind of authority is rightly claimed for the ministers of grace. To take the most obvious instance, it will make a very practical difference whether or no we think that they inherit the Apostolic commission to remit sins.

II. Again: what is the nature of the service which the Christian ministry offers to God? It can be represented as the voicing of the thoughts of the worshipping congregation, or as the suggestion to them of lofty ideals of self-devotion which they themselves can lay before God. As before, this side of the matter has its importance, and no one will attempt to deny it. But, obviously, if this is all, it cannot matter much what is the authority of the minister. The things he needs are a spiritual mind and, *longo intervallo*, address, a good voice, and, in the case of non-liturgical prayer, a certain literary ability. It would be best, no doubt, that such a person should be appointed to a lifelong ministry, and that he should devote himself to it with the fullest conviction that it is both profession and vocation. But there is no



reason, in the nature of things, why he should be set apart as a consecrated person, or why he should not at his own will retire and cease to be a clergyman. Indeed, such ministries as these are constantly performed, in all Christian communities, by men and women who do not profess to be ordained ministers at all. It does not seem, then, that any Divine authority can possibly be needed for such a ministry as this. If, on the other hand, Christian ministry on its Godward side consists chiefly, as Catholics believe, in repeating the act of Christ at the Last Supper, it is at least not unsuitable that the clearest possible authority should be demanded before anyone presumes to take upon himself such an office. Indeed, in regard to this matter of the Holy Eucharist there is an even more serious consideration. According to the conviction of the majority of Christians (though doubtless not the majority of Christian Englishmen), the vital essence of this service depends upon the fact that by a valid consecration the bread and wine undergo a certain spiritual change, in virtue of which we are able to present to God the one true and perfect offering of the sacrificed Body and Blood of Christ. Now it is not necessary to suppose that there is in the Christian priesthood any magical power which effects this change by means of some kind of spell: but it is certainly not unreasonable to hold that such a Eucharist as this is invalidated if the person offering it has not been duly empowered to do so. He must have *authority* in this matter to represent our Lord both in His own Person and in His mystical Body, the Church.

III. The nature of ministerial authority is the question at issue, and will have to be considered at some length. All we are now asking is whether authority really matters, and our contention is that this depends on whether the ministers of the Gospel are, on the manward side, ministers of grace as well

as ministers of ideas, and whether, on the Godward side, their functions are sacerdotal in the strict sense, or merely interpretative of the aspirations of their people.

If the latter, any enquiry as to their credentials is, in the last resort, puerile. But if the former, it has considerable importance.

But when we take our records as they stand, the question does not seem difficult to answer. No contrast could be more striking than that between the pre-Resurrection message of our Lord and His Apostles, and the duties which were to be theirs after He had risen again. Before the Resurrection it was "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; "I will build my Church"; but afterwards, "Do this in remembrance of Me"; "Feed My sheep"; "Make disciples of every nation, baptising them"; "Tarry . . . until ye be endued with power from on high." Even if critical doubts are insinuated as to these and similar passages, there is no explaining Apostolic Christianity on any theory that mere acceptance of a message is the way of salvation. The only picture of the Church which can be picked out from our documents is that of a worshipping brotherhood, presided over by a ministerial order, and believing itself to be living in vital union with its glorified Head. The view that Christianity consists in an individual finding of salvation through the personal appropriation of an idea and the view that Christian liturgy is merely the saying of prayers by one person on behalf of others arose, and could only have arisen, as a violent reaction against an over-institutionalised religion. The Church and the ministry are fundamental to primitive Christianity.

It can hardly be denied that the differentiation of the Church into clergy and laity is a part of its original constitution. Whether or no the actual illapse of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was on the Apostles alone,

or on the whole number of the "hundred and twenty," nothing could be more clear than that the distinction between the Apostles and "the rest"<sup>1</sup> was drawn by our Lord Himself, and that it was both clear and rigid. In government, in ministry and in discipline, in the admission and expulsion of members of the community, and in the right to delegate authority the Apostles unquestionably occupied a unique place. Our Lord had said, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you,"<sup>2</sup> and the Apostolic Church without question took Him at His word. We may rightly infer, then, that the Christian ministry is a ministry of grace and Eucharistic worship, and that at its origin it was exercised by the Apostles on the authority of their Master Himself.

To say this is not to prove that the ministry today succeeds to the position of the Apostles. We shall have to enquire what evidence there is of such a succession, whether it is succession to office or transmission of grace, or both, and whether it depends on bishops. But it does not seem too much to say two things even at this stage. First, that the Church cannot retain the characteristics of the Apostolic period unless it has received a ministry similar to that which the Apostles exercised; and, secondly, that for such a ministry there must be some definite commission which will give it an authority beyond any reasonable criticism. If the status of a Christian minister is something as definite as that of the Apostles, it is our business to make sure of the authority on which it is claimed. If the functions of the ministry were like those of St. John the Baptist, merely pointing to Christ, then in the nature of the case these questions about regularity and validity could not arise. But if the ministry is more like that of the Apostles after Pentecost, imparting the Holy Spirit to believers and incorporating them into the Body of Christ, then the

<sup>1</sup> See Acts v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xx. 21.

first thing we need to know is whether it is really a continuation of the Apostolic ministry or not, and we cannot avoid asking the question, What constitutes a valid Ordination and a true succession? The doctrine or theory of a successive ministry, true or false, stands for the fact that "God was not pleased to save the world by dialectic," or by the broadcasting of self-propagating ideas, but by appointing Apostles who should be valid representatives of Himself. These Apostles, moreover, were not mere evangelists, whose work was done when they had proclaimed their message, but pastors with a continuous responsibility for shepherding the flock of God. This responsibility was in its nature a permanent thing, and there is no sign whatever that it was meant to pass away. From the beginning the Christian minister has been one empowered to act in Christ's name, not chiefly because he has been chosen, or appointed, or recognised, but because he has been openly, definitely, and indubitably *sent*. No doubt there have from time to time appeared men with a prophetic ministry like that of John the Baptist, sometimes within, sometimes outside, the Apostolic line of succession. But such ministries are in their essence exceptional, and there is an extraordinary unreality in the idea that the only true ministry is that of men who are *obviously* called of God. The young priest must, no doubt, have a personal conviction of vocation, but in the nature of things that is a hidden thing, and nothing could be more undesirable than that he should attempt to display it for the satisfaction of others. If there is anything in his conduct or personality which makes it obvious that he is unfitted for the ministry, it is the duty of the bishop, or indeed of anyone who knows the facts, to prevent his Ordination; but after Ordination his personal endowments will for long remain more of a promise than a present reality. In the vast majority of cases

he seems externally to be simply a young man doing his best. But if he and his people alike are conscious that behind him there lies the august majesty of the mission of Christ Himself, symbolised and made effective by the laying on of Apostolic hands, then we ask no further questions about his call. That is henceforth a matter between himself and God. All that concerns other people is the concrete fact of his public commission.



## CHAPTER II

### SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE FOR THE CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

#### *A. The Gospels.*

IF it be true that the Christian ministry is one of grace, and not merely of ideas, and that it is representative of Christ, and not merely of His people, it is obvious that we cannot expect to find it in the Gospels except in embryo. When faith was only in process of formation, when "the Spirit was not yet given,"<sup>1</sup> when distinctively Christian worship did not yet exist, there was no room for ministry in the full Christian sense. We are allowed to witness the call of the first ministers of Christ, their gradual response, their training, certain preliminary and immature ministries, one very definite mission, even, according to St. John, a preliminary endowment with the Holy Spirit for ministerial work;<sup>2</sup> but there is no sign of any active exercise of the Christian ministry as the Church has, since Pentecost, experienced it.

But what we do find is the very clearest indication of the immense importance of all this preliminary work. A very large proportion of the actual time of our Lord's ministry seems to have been occupied

<sup>1</sup> St. John vii. 39.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xx. 22. Some scholars maintain that this is St. John's highly symbolical way of describing the inner meaning of Pentecost. In other words, that St. John, writing to Christians who knew all about the historical fact of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, suggests to them that that was *as though* the Ascended Christ were standing over the Apostles and giving them Divine authority to deal with sinners in His name.

with the training of the Twelve. Great stress is laid upon their names. The turning-point of the whole ministry is to be found in St. Peter's confession of faith, and our Lord's immediate promise that upon this rock He would build His Church. The gift of the keys constituted St. Peter chief steward of the Church to come, and the authority to bind or loose was conferred on him first, though it seems to be subsequently extended to "the Church."<sup>1</sup> So also our Lord spoke expressly of a future stewardship, and clearly implied that there would be those among His servants to whom He would give authority over their fellow-servants. It was the Twelve whom He summoned on the night before He suffered to the solemn inauguration of the liturgical worship of the Church which was to be. Nor does the temporary unworthiness of these future ministers destroy the gifts and calling of God. Nothing could be more unfaithful than their behaviour at the time of the Passion. Even the beloved disciple, if he is rightly identified with St. John, was among those who forsook Him and fled; and St. Peter, the chief of all, sank almost to the lowest depth. Yet none but Judas was rejected, and even he was left to take the law into his own hands. After the Resurrection it is still to St. Peter that our Lord is most concerned to show Himself:<sup>2</sup> and it is apparently the Eleven whom He at once constitutes the depositaries and ministers of the Holy Ghost,<sup>3</sup> and to whom He gives His final charge to make disciples of all nations, "baptising them."<sup>4</sup>

We must also notice for future reference<sup>5</sup> the appointment of another grade of ministers in the persons of the Seventy.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 15-19; xviii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xii. 41-43.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xx. 22. The impression left by St. John's narrative is that he is speaking only of the Eleven, though it is clear from St. Luke that others were also present.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 16-19.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 15.

*B. The Acts and the Rest of the New Testament.*

The first chapter of Acts naturally continues the atmosphere of the Gospels. All is expectancy here, and the action of the Church is confined to the election of two possible candidates to fill the vacant place in the ranks of the Apostles, and the selection of St. Matthias by the extraordinary method of casting lots. The transaction is eloquent of the preparatory nature of the Apostolic ministry before the endowment of Pentecost. Election is within the competence of the Church, but until the coming of the Paraclete there can be no Ordination in the full sense. The mould can be prepared: but for the filling of it it is necessary to wait upon God.

But as soon as the Holy Ghost had been shed forth, all is changed. At once the Apostles come to the front, and begin to exercise their characteristic functions. The Gift which has been given is to be shared with all who are rightly disposed by penitence. But the ministration of the Gift is in the hands of the Apostles. It is they who by the mouth of their leader offer to the conscience-stricken crowd the grace of Baptism, and therewith and thereby the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In chapters i. to v. there is no sign of any other ministry than that of the Apostles. But at the beginning of chapter vi. we get a new departure. The business side of the ministry is getting beyond the physical capacity of the Twelve, and some subordinate ministry is needed to supervise the "serving of tables." This is probably to be thought of as something more than the mere "business" of "relief work," accounting, and the like. While Agape and Eucharist were so closely connected, the characteristic Christian "table" was the "Table of the Lord." Moreover, all that we know of the subsequent career of the new

ministers suggests that whatever the primary intention of their office may have been, it soon developed into spiritual work. St. Stephen was a miracle-worker, "full of grace and power."<sup>1</sup> St. Philip was a missionary and "evangelist."<sup>2</sup> Nicolas, the Judas of the Seven, appears to have become an heresiarch.<sup>3</sup>

The general tradition of the Church since the time of Irenæus has considered that the new ministers now elected and ordained are the first deacons of the Church. In that case it would seem that the Apostles delegated their authority gradually, beginning with what was least distinctively spiritual. Others have thought that the Seven were a special and temporary order. Others, again, have suggested that they were really the first presbyters. In favour of this last view several considerations may be urged. It is in St. Luke's manner to give a detailed description of one and one only of any important class of incidents, and it would seem strange that the Ordination of the first deacons should be given at such length, while the more important presbyters are simply taken for granted. Again, we have continuous evidence of the presbyterate from this time onwards, but deacons are first mentioned almost thirty years later in the Epistle to the Philippians.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, at Jerusalem the presbyters did apparently have charge of the business of the Church.<sup>5</sup> Further, it seems strange *prima facie* that a deacon, whose special function has always been to serve under someone else, should be sent off on the kind of independent mission which we find assigned to St. Philip in chapter viii.

But however this may have been, it seems incontestable that St. Luke means us to see in the narrative of chapter vi. the archetype of all appointments to the Christian ministry. It is therefore much to our purpose to notice exactly what happened on this occasion.

<sup>1</sup> Acts vi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Acts viii. 5, xxi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. ii. 6, 15 (?).

<sup>4</sup> Phil. i. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xi. 30.

The Apostles signified their willingness to ordain. They left the choice of ordinands to the lay people, only laying down the conditions that they should be "of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom." When the election had been made they ordained them by the imposition of hands. This, then, is the classical passage which gives us the norm for all appointments to Holy Orders. From it we may infer that it is the business of the laity to find and produce candidates for the ministry, and that when they have been found they are to be brought to the Apostolic authority for approval, and in order to receive their actual commission and spiritual powers.

Our next indication of a ministry other than and subordinate to that of the Apostles is that of the "elders" or presbyters at Jerusalem, who, as we have seen, may be the same as the Seven. They are mentioned without introduction in Acts xi. 30, and are evidently a body of great importance in Acts xv. If they are not the same as the Seven, we can only suppose that St. Luke took it for granted that a Christian synagogue would have its elders, just as the parent Jewish one had. It is possible that the elders at Jerusalem had as yet no specialised spiritual functions, and that their position was really not unlike that of the disciplinary council of elders connected with the Jewish synagogues. They have no title but that of elders, or elder brethren, and, as we have seen, they controlled matters of finance and relief. It must be noticed that they are an instance, unique at this date, of a group of ministers working under the direct and constant supervision of a local superior. St. James, the brother of our Lord, seems to hold exactly the position of the diocesan bishop of later days (except, of course, that he had not a tract of country called a diocese under his sole jurisdiction). Though not one of the Twelve, he belongs to the pre-Pentecostal Apostolic group, and clearly has the



status of an Apostle. From the middle of the second century onwards it is invariably taken for granted that he was Bishop of Jerusalem in the ordinary sense of the term.

So far we have encountered no great difficulty. The principle seems clear. Ministerial authority resides in the Apostles, and they delegate it, either by their own choice or after election by the laity, to suitable men, who after Ordination are called presbyters, or deacons, as the case may be. But in Acts xi. and xiii. we find the Church at Antioch under the care of two other classes of ministers, described as prophets and teachers. One of these, St. Barnabas, had been sent from Jerusalem by the Church in that place (*i.e.*, either by the Twelve, or by St. James with the elders) as an authoritative delegate to report on and set in order the affairs of the Church at Antioch, which had received the Gospel from certain men of Cyprus and Cyrene, but had apparently no regular ministry until his arrival.

There is no evidence to enable us to say whether or no Barnabas or the other prophets had been ordained. It is possible that a recognised gift of prophecy may have carried with it a ministerial position only second to that of the Apostles. It must be remembered that the Seventy were already in existence before Pentecost by our Lord's own appointment, and it seems likely enough that they, or many of them, were among the hundred and twenty who were present at the original outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In that case, if we assume that they as well as the Twelve received the Holy Spirit, they also, like the Twelve, would presumably have needed no further Ordination. All that Barnabas and the others would have required would have been what in later days has been called "jurisdiction"—that is to say, a licence from the supreme authority to use the gifts which they indubitably possessed. Barnabas and the



other prophets came from Jerusalem, a *latere apostolorum*, and Saul, already recognised by the Twelve as the recipient of a special personal mission from our Lord, is specially summoned to Antioch by Barnabas acting as (shall we say, to complete an outrageous anachronism?) Vicar Apostolic. There is evidence from St. Paul's Epistles that "Apostles, Prophets, Teachers" may have formed a recognised triad of Apostolic ministers, "set in the Church" by God Himself,<sup>1</sup> and only needing recognition from the Church and licence to execute their ministry.

The Church at Antioch, then, was under the charge of a prophetic group not unlike that of the Twelve themselves, but none the less needing recognition by the Twelve, as supreme rulers of the Church. But now comes a strange and unique occurrence. It is made known to this prophetic body that the Holy Spirit is calling two of their number to a special evangelistic work, and they are bidden to "separate" them for the purpose. This they proceed to do by fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands. At first sight we are inclined to think of this as an Ordination, and it is necessary to notice that Paul and Barnabas, who before were called prophets, are afterwards referred to as "apostles."<sup>2</sup> But a little thought seems to show that it is difficult to think of it quite in this way. The whole essence of Ordination in every known case<sup>3</sup> is that the recipient receives

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 28. But cf. Eph. iv. 11, where there are four, or possibly five, classes: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers. St. Philip, and apparently St. Timothy, are called "Evangelists" (Acts xxi. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 5).

<sup>2</sup> This would have more weight if the new title were used immediately. In fact, however, the ceremony is described in Acts xiii. 3, and the title is not given until xiv. 14.

<sup>3</sup> The case of Alexandria is not an exception, even if St. Jerome's account of it is true (see p. 43). There is no evidence worth the name that the presbyters *consecrated* their bishop, as Dr. Streeter asserts (*The Primitive Church*, p. 254). The only authority who alleges this is the very inaccurate tenth-century writer, Eutychius. St. Jerome's word is "nominated"—something entirely different.

(through symbolic imposition of hands) a ministerial position which he has not held before, and which is not superior to that already held by the dispenser or dispensers of the gift. But if this were an Ordination it would mean that a group of ministers laid hands upon two of their own number to give them a position superior to their own. The truth seems to be that in this instance the imposition of hands is purely a recognition of something which has already happened, and the clue is probably to be sought in St. Paul's own characteristic claim that *Apostleship* is not an office mediated by the Church at all. In his own case there was the actual appearance of the Risen Lord. In regard to St. Barnabas we do not know enough to make any assertion. All that we know is that he was : (1) originally delegated by the Twelve ; (2) a prophet (for it is inconceivable that a mere "teacher" should head the list of the governing body at Antioch) ; (3) that he was indicated for a special mission by the Holy Ghost ; (4) that St. Paul and St. Luke both refer to him as an apostle.<sup>1</sup> The idea of Ordination was, of course, still in its infancy, and it is not to be supposed that laying on of hands would necessarily suggest the bestowal of ministerial authority. It was used for many other purposes in the primitive Church,<sup>2</sup> and in the present case *may* have only signified separation for a special mission. True, it normally suggests the exercise of authority,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 5, 6 ; Acts xiv. 14. The title is not reserved for the Twelve alone (see Rom. xvi. 7 ; 1 Thess. ii. 6). In these cases we might think that the word is used loosely (as St. Augustine is called "the apostle of England"). The *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (see pp. 29-32), however, seems to show that there was a recognised "order" of "apostles." But we have no evidence as to the method by which they were appointed. Some proof of supernatural vocation may have been necessary. The requirement of having seen our Lord after His Resurrection cannot have been insisted on unless the "apostle" of the *Teaching* is an altogether different officer.

<sup>2</sup> For Confirmation : Acts viii. 17, xix. 6 ; Heb. vi. 2 ; for healing : St. Mark xvi. 18 ; Acts ix. 12, 17, xxviii. 8 ; for the reconciliation of penitents.

but in the present case the "ordaining" authority, if that be the right word, is the Holy Ghost, and the act of the Church is a *mere* outward sign, acknowledging what God has done, but in no sense the means by which He does it. We may compare the baptism of Cornelius.<sup>1</sup> Where God had obviously intervened to give the inward grace, all that was necessary was for the Church to recognise the Divine action by the appropriate outward sign. But that did seem necessary.<sup>2</sup>

The next ministerial group which we must notice is that of the "elders," whom, as St. Luke tells us, Paul and Barnabas appointed in every city in which they had founded a Church during their missionary tour. Here was a new situation. Hitherto the Christian Church had been a development of Judaism. The districts hitherto evangelised had all been within easy reach of Jerusalem, and the Twelve or their delegates could keep in touch with them. The Church at Jerusalem was under the government of the quasi-Apostle St. James, and the only other Church of which we have full information, that of Antioch, was under the charge of tried and trusted prophets and teachers. But Paul and Barnabas had to leave behind them groups of converts who had in many cases only just emerged from raw heathenism. It was impossible to constitute them as autonomous Churches: but it was equally impossible to leave them for years without any ministry at all. Some persons had to be given disciplinary and liturgical authority, and be responsible for pastoral and missionary activity. The Apostles solved the problem temporarily by appointing (*i.e.*, presumably, ordaining)

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 44-48.

<sup>2</sup> We might compare also the ordinary administration in modern times of the sacrament of Penance. A very large number, probably the vast majority, of penitents have already received the Divine pardon before actually making their confessions. But it does not follow that there is no need of oral confession and the outward sacramental act of absolution.

*elders*. But we must notice that these seem to have differed somewhat from those at Jerusalem both in function and in title. For their functions we have only to look at St. Paul's affecting farewell speech to them at Ephesus,<sup>1</sup> from which it is clear that they had complete pastoral charge of their flocks and were responsible to none but St. Paul himself. To him, however, they *were* responsible, and likewise, as we shall see later, to his delegates: and there is not a suggestion anywhere that they were empowered to add to their own number. *A priori* it is most improbable that such power should have been given to men who in the nature of the case were novices in the Christian life, and the actual possibility of it seems to be excluded by the fact that, later, St. Paul sent a delegate to Ephesus, as he did to Crete, with the express purpose of ordaining to the ministry.<sup>2</sup> To this office of the presbyterate, essentially a new office, St. Paul and St. Barnabas attached a new title, or at least description, that of bishop.

These "bishops" are not independent rulers of dioceses like the bishop of later days. They are simply local groups of clergy, only differentiated, so far as we know, from the simple presbyters of Jerusalem and from the Order of priesthood today by the fact that they had no superior to look to on the spot. They are often called by modern scholars "presbyter-bishops." It is important to notice that wherever they appear, both in Apostolic and sub-Apostolic

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 18-35.

<sup>2</sup> This, of course, is to assume the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles (see pp. 20, 21).

Dr. Headlam asserts that St. Timothy, unlike St. Titus, was *not* intended to "ordain elders." But although it is true that he is not definitely told to do so in the Epistles addressed to him, the elaborate list of the qualifications of a "bishop" (*i.e.*, a presbyter) immediately succeeding a statement about one who "seeketh the office of a bishop" must surely suggest fresh ordinations (1 Tim. iii. 1-7). And many good authorities still believe that "lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim. v. 22) refers to Ordination, although no doubt it might mean the reconciliation of a penitent, or, less probably, Confirmation.

times, there is always an indication of a superior authority somewhere in the background. St. Paul keeps in touch with them both by letters and by periodical visitations, and finally summons them from a distance to Miletus, quite in the manner of a modern bishop, in order to deliver his farewell charge.

The presbyter-bishops, then, were not what we call bishops, but what we call priests. They were under the rule of a superior authority. That authority, however, was not a resident bishop (in the modern sense), but a travelling Apostle.

We may probably assume that it was St. Paul's custom to ordain presbyter-bishops in every local Church which he founded. We have evidence for Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch in Pisidia,<sup>1</sup> the churches of the first missionary journey: for Philippi<sup>2</sup> and Ephesus,<sup>3</sup> founded respectively on the second and third journeys. There can be no reason to suppose that the same was not true of Thessalonica,<sup>4</sup> Corinth,<sup>5</sup> and Colossæ, except the negative one that they are not mentioned in the Epistles to those places. St. Peter, writing to the Churches of Northern Asia Minor as a whole, assumes the presence of "elders," and most significantly speaks of himself as their "fellow-elder."<sup>6</sup>

We proceed to consider the evidence of the Pastoral Epistles.<sup>7</sup> Here there is the preliminary difficulty that their authenticity is disputed. This is not the place to dwell on that point. It is chiefly a question of vocabulary. There is an astonishing difference between that of these and of St. Paul's earlier Epistles. But it is pointed out that Greek was not St. Paul's native

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv. 21, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. i. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xx. 17, 28.

<sup>4</sup> There was a definite ministry at Thessalonica (1 Thess. v. 12), and there can be no reasonable doubt that it consisted of presbyter-bishops. Only St. Paul does not happen to call them so.

<sup>5</sup> Even the wildly ecstatic and rather disorderly Church of Corinth had its "helps" and "governments" (1 Cor. xii. 28).

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. v. 1 (assuming the authenticity of the Epistle).

<sup>7</sup> *I.e.*, 1 and 2 Tim. and Tit.



tongue, and that he might therefore be expected to be exceptionally sensitive to his entourage in this very matter of vocabulary. Indeed, the argument of hostile critics depends very largely on the contention that the vocabulary of the Pastorals resembles that of the Roman Greek writers of the next generation. But if these Epistles are St. Paul's, Rome was the place from which he wrote them.<sup>1</sup>

The merely *a priori* argument that the Church in Ephesus and Crete could not have been in such an advanced state of development during St. Paul's life-time seems to beg the question at issue, and the ecclesiastical development of fifty years later, astonishingly mature as it was, is far easier to explain if it can be believed that it was started on the course which it actually took by the authority of an Apostle. Moreover, in regard to the particular question of the ministry, with which we are here concerned, the position indicated in these Epistles gives a very natural and convincing picture of the transition from the system of the Acts to that of the fully developed Catholic Church. In any case it is coming to be widely acknowledged that they contain at least a considerable amount of authentic Pauline matter.

It is quite astonishing how little account is taken of the Pastoral Epistles by those who contend that episcopacy in the modern sense was *merely* an exaltation of one member of the college of presbyters. For what we find in these Epistles is the beginning of the Apostolic solution of the problem of a continuous ministry. Hitherto it seems that the local Churches were under Apostolic tutelage. We hear of no means of propagating the ministry except by direct Apostolic appointment and ordination, and it is plain that the final word in every matter lay with

<sup>1</sup> See Goudge and Burn in the *New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, pp. 573-581. It must also be remembered that St. Paul did not write the bulk of his letters with his own hand, but by means of an amanuensis.



the Apostles, at first corporately, afterwards individually. Clearly such a system could not last for more than a generation at most. In the Pastoral Epistles we find that St. Paul has taken the enormously important step of entrusting the government of two of his local Churches, by no means to one of their own presbyter-bishops, but to nominees of his own, specially commissioned for the purpose. It is very difficult not to see in these delegates the equivalent of the later diocesan bishop. They are to control doctrine,<sup>1</sup> morals,<sup>2</sup> and worship.<sup>3</sup> They are to ordain presbyter-bishops and deacons,<sup>4</sup> and to judge of their qualifications before doing so. While age is apparently still a qualification for presbyter-bishops ("elders" in more senses than one),<sup>5</sup> St. Timothy is evidently a youngish man, but he is to maintain his superior dignity,<sup>6</sup> and is to regard himself as entrusted with an almost autocratic jurisdiction. He and St. Titus have apparently full power of excommunication, and the latter is instructed to enforce it in cases of "heresy" or "factiousness."<sup>7</sup> Above all, they are to keep the faith intact.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, they are still themselves under the Apostolic authority of St. Paul. He maintains visitatorial powers,<sup>9</sup> and in 2 Tim. summons his delegate to his own presence.<sup>10</sup> It is not quite clear that they were definitely "consecrated," as we should say, to the episcopate. St. Paul writes to St. Timothy of "the gift of God which is in thee by the laying

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 3, iv. 1-4, vi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 9, iii. 11; Tit. ii. 1-10.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 8.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 1-13, v. 22 (?); Tit. i. 5.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. v. 1.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Tit. iii. 10.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 20.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 14.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 9. It is often asserted on the authority of this and the following verse and of Tit. i. 5 that the office of St. Timothy and St. Titus was only temporary. But St. Paul does not say so: only he does seem to have claimed authority to control the movements of these "Vicars Apostolic."

on of my hands ” ;<sup>1</sup> but this might refer to any order of the ministry, or, conceivably, for the matter of that, to Confirmation. In the earlier Epistle it is “ the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”<sup>2</sup> We are tempted to ask, What kind of episcopal consecration is this which is accompanied by the laying on of the hands of the lower Order? Nor, again, is anything said of the episcopal power to consecrate new bishops as well as ordain new priests. We can well understand that this power might be in abeyance as long as St. Paul was alive, as it is today (as regards the *right* to consecrate) in all bishops except metropolitans : but we cannot fail to notice that in fact nothing is said about it, and that there is no suggestion anywhere as to the means by which the ministry is to be carried on for the future.

But at the time when he wrote the second Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul was already expecting martyrdom, and it is impossible to suppose that he gave no instructions on the matter. Is it not likely that he intended to give to St. Timothy, and perhaps also to St. Mark, the full authority to propagate the ministry when they obeyed his summons to Rome, and that this is one reason for the earnestness with which he urges it?<sup>3</sup> If this is so, the Pastoral Epistles would represent a transition stage in the evolution of the later episcopate.

Finally, we may point to an indication of the fully developed episcopal system which is to be found in the third Epistle of St. John. In that Epistle “ the Elder,” whoever that may be, writing to a certain Gaius, complains that his own authority is rejected by an ambitious ecclesiastic named Diotrephes.<sup>4</sup> This person has apparently a position which enables him to refuse to receive the writer’s pastoral letters or

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 9, 21.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 14.

<sup>4</sup> 3 John, 9, 10.

to welcome his delegates, and is so far abusing it as to excommunicate those who did welcome them. If we may believe that the Epistle is from the hand of St. John, we have the very interesting situation of the Apostle himself continuing to claim the same authority over Diotrephes that St. Paul had exercised over St. Timothy and St. Titus : but the evolution of the episcopate has progressed to a point at which the Apostolic delegate actually presumes to resist the Apostle himself. Dr. Streeter, believing that the "Elder" is that Ephesian John who is said to have been confused with the Apostle, maintains that he is bishop of the mother-see of Ephesus, and that we have here the beginning of a distinction between the episcopal and the metropolitical authority.

What, then, is the general result of our consideration of the Scriptural evidence ?

Positively : we have clear and distinct testimony on the following points :

Our Lord before His Ascension gave full official authority to the Eleven, and at Pentecost they, with St. Matthias, received the spiritual endowment necessary for the exercise of this authority.

In virtue of this plenary power we find them governing the Church, and administering all gifts of grace, and in particular delegating a portion of their own powers to certain persons at Jerusalem.

There are also other ministers of the Church whose original appointment is not described. Among these, the most conspicuous are the "prophets."

St. Paul's position is exceptional. He regards himself as in all respects the equal of the Twelve. This claim is based on the personal appearance to him of our Lord, afterwards substantiated by the ministry of Ananias at his baptism, by the recognition granted to him by the Twelve, by the prophetic vocation to his Apostolic work, and by the con-

sequent imposition of the hands of the prophets at Antioch.

There are others who have the title of Apostle besides the Twelve and St. Paul: and in particular St. Barnabas.

All these form the missionary ministry by means of which the Church began to spread over the world.

But we also see the beginnings of a localised ministry.

St. James, though apparently the spiritual equal of the Apostles, is the local head of the mother Church of Jerusalem, where he rules with the assistance of a group of presbyters.

There are also presbyters appointed by St. Paul in all churches of his own foundation: these are also called bishops.

Finally, in the Pastoral Epistles we find the beginnings of the rule of an individual minister whose position can hardly be distinguished from that of the single bishop as he appears in the following century. He not only governs the local Church, but ordains its ministry: and he himself owes his position to appointment and Ordination by the Apostle, St. Paul.

In the third Epistle of St. John we seem to see in Diotrephes a bishop in the full sense of the word.

Negatively: there is no instance of a congregation making its own ministers, nor of presbyter-bishops perpetuating their own office, except in so far as they joined with the Apostle in the Ordination or Consecration of St. Timothy.

There are various uncertainties. Above all, we must not ascribe to the Apostolic Church a clear-cut distinction between Divine grace, ecclesiastical order, and jurisdiction: and it is not always possible to be sure of three Holy Orders, sharply differentiated. But the general "Catholic" principles are all there. A man cannot minister unless he is sent to do so. This sending is normally the act of the Apostles. There

is much variety as to the way in which it is indicated who is to be sent. Sometimes the people choose, and the Apostles approve and ordain. Sometimes the prophets indicate, and the Apostles (or just possibly in one unique case the prophets) ordain. Sometimes, perhaps, the ministry is so obviously supernatural that it only needs the *recognition* of the Apostles. It is conceivable, no doubt, that in some cases a local group of presbyter-bishops may have been given authority to ordain successors. Provided the authority really was given, this would be no breach of the principle of Apostolic succession. All that we can say is that there is no evidence of this ever having taken place, and the evidence of the Pastoral Epistles goes the other way. In any case, it seems impossible that any and every presbyter-bishop should individually have had such an authority inherent in his office. To have given such authority would have argued little less than insanity on the part of the Apostolic body.

In spite of some uncertainties and some blurring of those outlines which to us seem so familiar, we may say with confidence that the distinctive note throughout is that ministry is from above, not from below. Our Lord Himself is responsible for the original differentiation into Apostolic ministers and non-ministerial laity. That is the form of the Church as He delivered it to us. The ministry is sent to, and set over, the Church, not evolved from the Church by any merely natural process of development. This does not mean that the Church is the product of the ministry, but that the Apostolic college contained within itself all the ministerial authority that there was. No one could minister unless recognised by the Apostles. *A fortiori* no one could license anyone else to minister except by Apostolic commission. Such recognition, licence, or commission was given, not by a document like civil authority, but *religiously*



by a sign and prayer invoking the grace of God. Therefore there were two aspects to it. The ordained man was both licensed to minister and given a grace from God (*charisma*) to endow his ministry. Thus it was emphasised that the Christian minister is not merely lawfully appointed by those who have authority to do so, but that his mission is actually direct from God. Jurisdiction is one thing, grace is another, but both are necessary. A lawful ministry must be in succession to the Apostles: a fruitful ministry must normally have the original Apostolic grace transmitted to it. Both principles seem to emerge from our consideration of the evidence of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is quite true, as Dr. Streeter points out in *The Primitive Church* (chap. ii.), that with the exception of St. Peter and St. Paul we know very little about the lives and acts of the Apostles. According to him, the best indication of how they really spent their time is to be found in the instructions given to them by our Lord in St. Matt. x. 5 ff., which is really a description of the Apostolic practice for which the first Gospel makes our Lord take the responsibility. We must, then, he says, "eliminate from our minds the traditional picture of the Twelve Apostles sitting at Jerusalem, like a College of Cardinals . . . superintending the organisation of the Primitive Church." He points out that the evidence of St. Paul (Gal. i. 18, 19) is against the idea that when he first went to Jerusalem the Apostles were there as a body. Yet the first twelve chapters of the Acts certainly give the impression that Jerusalem *was* their headquarters (see especially Acts viii. 1), and there does not seem any improbability in the supposition that Jerusalem did remain the centre to which they returned again and again from their missionary journeyings. If that is the case, it is still true that the Apostolic college as a whole would be responsible for the development of the Church and its ministry as long as they remained in or about Jerusalem. St. Luke, after his manner, gives full descriptions of the acts of the two principal Apostles, and does not even attempt to summarise the activities of the others. The conspicuousness of St. James is due to his office as bishop of the mother Church of Jerusalem, rather than to his natural relationship to Christ. The other "brethren of the Lord" are very dim figures.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SUB-APOSTOLIC AGE

It has often been pointed out that the two generations which follow the closing of the New Testament Canon are the most obscure period of the history of the Church. This is as true in regard to our present subject as to any other. While on the one hand we have a considerable amount of evidence as to the character of the ministry and the method of appointment to it during the Apostolic period, and on the other there is ample information on both points for the whole of Church history from A.D. 150 onwards, the years from 90 to 150 are a kind of "tunnel," in which it is by no means easy to see exactly what happened in every case. It is obvious that this obscurity makes it possible for it to be maintained that there is a discontinuity between the ministry of the Apostolic age and that of the later period. From 150, as we shall see, there is only one opinion in the Church. The bishop is the ordaining authority, and no one else, and the functions of the various grades of the ministry are already, broadly speaking, what they have been ever since. In the Apostolic age, as we have already seen, there are various questions which can be raised and various uncertainties which it is not possible to settle out of hand. The position is clearly unique. However strongly we may hold to the Apostolic character of the later ministry, we cannot maintain that there is no distinction between an Apostle and a bishop, and however strongly the position of St. Timothy and St. Titus suggests the constitutional monarchy of the later episcopate, the fact of the Apostolic authority of St. Paul himself in

the background does certainly make a difference. It is abundantly clear from the language of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James that the ministry of presbyters was everywhere fully established and intended to be permanent, and we should like to be able to trace the steps by which the rule of single localised bishops was substituted for that of apostles governing the various Churches from a distance. But the vital years are those between the death of the Apostles and the full establishment of monarchical episcopacy, and it is the evidence for these very years that is so elusive. All that we can hope to do is to show that the theory and practice of Ordination universally held and followed from A.D. 150 onwards (*a*) is a legitimate development of what we find in the New Testament, and (*b*) is upheld by what we do know of the intervening period.

It is necessary, then, to examine the evidence for this period with scrupulous care.

#### *A. "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles."*

This is our earliest post-Apostolic authority, and, for what it is worth, must be closely scrutinised. Unfortunately it is difficult to estimate exactly how much it *is* worth. It is a Jewish Christian document, very highly esteemed in Syria and Egypt in primitive times, subsequently entirely lost, and rediscovered at the end of the nineteenth century. Its origin is uncertain, but it must be either Syrian or Egyptian. It is strangely unlike any other Christian literature in existence, and certainly does not attain to a very high spiritual tone. It is often maintained that it throws light on a siding rather than on the main line of Christian and Catholic development.<sup>1</sup> Its im-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Streeter maintains that it was written from Antioch to certain rather undeveloped Syrian Churches "with the object of standardising the organisation of the Churches in the smaller towns and villages, and of encouraging them to establish a permanent ministry—largely

portance for our present subject is that it bears witness to a roving ministry of apostles, prophets, and teachers, as well as to the localised one of presbyter-bishops and deacons. Of these, the "apostles" are essentially peripatetic, like the apostles of New Testament times. The prophets, on the other hand, might settle down if they chose. If a prophet is present he is to celebrate the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> The bishops and deacons are to be appointed by the people. Nothing is said as to the manner of their Ordination. Their functions are "to perform the service of the prophets and teachers." That is to say, presumably and by analogy, that in the absence of the prophet the presbyter-bishop would celebrate and the deacon would assist him, and either or both might prophesy or teach.<sup>2</sup>

We have seen already that the name of apostle is not confined to the Twelve even in the New Testa-

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with a view to saving them from exploitation by wandering impostors professing to be prophets or 'apostles'" (*The Primitive Church*, p. 144).

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton, however (*The People of God*, vol. ii., note iv.), considers that the Eucharistic prayers in the *Teaching* are meant to be said by the people *before* the actual prayer of Consecration, and that the Prophet's part was to follow on with extemporary prayer. He maintains that it would be taken for granted that the celebrant would be one of the presbyter-bishops, inasmuch as the celebration of the Eucharist was the very reason for their existence. He therefore denies that the *Teaching* gives the Prophet the right of celebrating.

Salmon suggests that the liturgy in the *Teaching* belongs to the Agape rather than the Eucharist, the word "Eucharist" being used in a broad sense to include the whole solemnity of Agape-Eucharist (*Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 616). Dr. Gore, with some hesitation, seems to agree with him (*The Church and the Ministry*, p. 369). These prayers are certainly extraordinarily different from any other known Eucharistic prayers. St. Clement's and St. Justin Martyr's indications of liturgical form are in the direct line between our Lord and St. Paul and St. John on the one hand, and the developed fourth-century liturgies on the other. The prayers of the *Teaching* suggest a slightly Christianised Judaism.

<sup>2</sup> In Hamilton's view, the "service of prophets and teachers" is precisely prophecy and teaching. The presbyter-bishop will celebrate in any case; that is what he is for: but in the absence of prophets and teachers he may deputise for them in *their* service.

ment, and that it is not clear either in the case of these secondary apostles or in that of the New Testament prophets what was the manner of their appointment. Were they ordained, or did they somehow share the original Pentecostal endowment, or were their obvious gifts so conspicuous as to authenticate their ministry without further need of anything except recognition? In the case of the New Testament apostles and prophets we came to no certain conclusion, and in the nature of the case it is impossible even to find any evidence in the case of the *Teaching*. All that we can say is that there are clearly two classes of ministers superior to that of the presbyter-bishops, and that their authority is for some reason taken for granted. They cannot have been present on the Day of Pentecost, but whether they received Ordination or not it is impossible to tell. As to the presbyter-bishops and deacons we may justifiably believe that they needed Ordination before they could minister. The *Teaching*, being addressed to the laity, naturally only deals with the manner of choosing them : they are to be "appointed" by the lay people. It can hardly be doubted that they would afterwards be ordained by one of the wandering "apostles."

The situation is not unlike that which we see in the Acts. The laity now elect their own presbyters, as they had done in the case of the Seven, instead of having them chosen for them by their apostle, as in the missionary Churches of St. Paul's foundation : but there is no reason to suppose that the power of choice carried with it any power of Ordination.

It must be noted that the system indicated in the *Teaching* shows the clearest tokens of its own very unsatisfactory character. The wandering apostle or prophet is not always a very desirable person, and the flock have to be warned of the signs of false apostles and false prophets. The time was ripe for a more



settled ministry, and it is possible that we see the beginning of a threefold *local* ministry in the fact that the prophet will sometimes settle down and take charge permanently of the same flock. But the possibility must be kept in view that we have in the *Teaching* a document which has reference to a quite abnormal, and perhaps only half-Christian community.

### *B. Apostolic Activity in Asia Minor.*

But we are not altogether without evidence of what was going on at this critical period in another part of the young Christian world, more central than even Antioch. The Apostolic and sub-Apostolic ages must of course overlap, and we cannot ignore the fact that there are strong traditions in existence as to the later life of the great St. John. According to Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and St. Irenæus, all first-rate second-century authorities, St. John founded the episcopal sees of Asia Minor. In other words, the cities which St. Paul had left in the charge of presbyter-bishops, but in some cases under the intermediate authority of such officers as St. Timothy and St. Titus, were now to be given resident bishops of their own by the Apostolic powers inherent in St. John. This is very strong evidence indeed, and though not strictly contemporary, like that of the *Teaching*, is really of vastly greater importance. If it is true, it means that St. John supplemented the work of St. Paul (1) by making permanent what may have been only a tentative arrangement, (2) by extending the episcopal system from the central city of Ephesus to the surrounding country. If it is asked, Why was this not done before? the answer seems simple. It was not until after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 that it was fully realised that provision must be made for the permanent existence of the Catholic Church. When once that catastrophe

had occurred, it became obvious that the old order had passed away and, our Lord's predictions having been in one sense fulfilled, the expectation of His immediate final Advent disappeared. What could be more probable than that the surviving Apostles (both St. Irenæus and St. Ignatius use the plural in this connection) should have hastened to give the quasi-Apostolic position of a diocesan bishop to the presiding presbyter-bishops of the district?<sup>1</sup> In view of the fact that the power of Ordination seems always to have been withheld from presbyter-bishops, it might also seem almost certain that the institution of episcopacy in the modern sense would mean not only individual rule, but sole authority to confer the grace of the ministry.

### *C. St. Clement of Rome.*

Here again we have an authority from the very end of the first century, or possibly the first decade of the second. According to a very strong tradition he is the third Bishop of Rome. He writes in the name of the Roman Church to the Church of Corinth to urge the restoration to their office of certain presbyter-bishops who have been unjustly turned out. It seems clear that at this date there is no individual bishop ruling over the Corinthian Church. But it also seems fairly clear that the presbyter-bishops are not the supreme authority, and that they have not the right of passing on their own office. For (1) there is a sharp distinction made between the rulers and the presbyters. The former are to be obeyed, the latter honoured: the former govern, the latter lead in sacrificial worship. Moreover, we still seem to be at the stage in which, as in the Pastoral Epistles, the presbyters are actually elders in the literal sense.

<sup>1</sup> No doubt the constitution of the mother Church of Jerusalem would serve as a model.

They are twice distinguished from "the young." Yet it is abundantly clear that they have a definite office, and that the "elders" are not merely the elderly. And (2) this office is distinguished from another, the qualification for which is not age, but distinction. There are certain "distinguished men" who have the power not merely of ministering, but of appointing to the ministry. This power they owe to the Apostles themselves. "Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. . . . They appointed their first-fruits . . . to be bishops and deacons to them that believe. . . . Our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife over the bishop's office. For this cause therefore . . . they appointed the aforesaid persons, and afterwards they gave an injunction<sup>1</sup> that if they should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministration. Those, therefore, who were appointed by them, or afterwards by other distinguished men . . . we consider to be unjustly thrust out from their ministration."<sup>2</sup>

It seems natural to suppose that these "distinguished men" are the same as the "rulers." If so, we have three orders—rulers, presbyters, deacons—of whom the first govern and transmit the ministry, the second "offer the gifts" and "minister to the flock of Christ," and the third presumably assist their superiors. The "rulers" would thus correspond to the modern bishop, except that it would appear that their jurisdiction was corporate rather than individual. There is no sign of a single "Bishop of Corinth."<sup>3</sup> Even so it is, of course, possible that each "ruler," surrounded by his own group of presbyters, presided over the Church

<sup>1</sup> Another reading is: "They provided for a continuance."

<sup>2</sup> *Clem. ad Cor.* xli.-xliv.

<sup>3</sup> Yet forty or fifty years later Hegesippus found a single bishop at Corinth, and apparently a list of his predecessors back to an Apostolic founder.

in some particular district or village: in modern language, the dioceses were very small.

This, however, is hardly likely. If the "rulers" were individual governors of particular congregations, it would have fallen to them to preside at the Eucharist. But it is clear that "to offer the gifts" is the privilege of all the presbyter-bishops alike. It is better, therefore, to think of the "rulers" as being superintendents who journeyed as need required from place to place, having been given, by the Apostles in the first instance, a general authority over the Church, and in particular a responsibility for filling up vacancies in the ministerial order. This responsibility is not fulfilled in an arbitrary manner. The consent of the local Church has to be given before any new presbyters can be ordained. But, once ordained, they cannot be deposed by the mere *fiat* of the laity. It is quite true that St. Clement does not actually say that the "distinguished" men owed their position to Apostolic authority; he says nothing of the way in which they were appointed. But to suppose they were merely "men of influence" makes nonsense of his argument. "Christ from God, the Apostles from Christ—and then, after the Apostles a break? each congregation or community a law to itself, with its ministry self-evolved? That is not the witness we have received."<sup>1</sup>

Among some things which are obscure in St. Clement's letter two facts seem clear. The first is that which is now commonly called "Apostolic Succession"; that is to say, not a mere succession in office, but a transmission of the ministerial authority. Christ from God, the Apostles from Christ, the bishops and deacons from the Apostles: that is the order. The second is something which is at least very like what we call *episcopal* succession. For St. Clement does not go on to say, as we should perhaps have

<sup>1</sup> Prof. C. Turner, *Anglo-Catholic Congress Books*, No. 33.

expected, "new bishops and deacons from those who already hold those offices." He seems to mention a particular group who alone have power to appoint new ministers, and though he has no name to give them except the vague one of "distinguished" men, the privilege which he assigns to them is by no means vague. It is they, and they alone, who have the responsibility for handing on the ministry. It may appear to some minds more probable that they did so as a group, and not as individuals, and there is nothing in St. Clement to disprove it. Nor does he tell us how the "approved men" were appointed or consecrated when the original nominees of the Apostles died out. Nor does he say anything about laying on of hands as the method by which Ordination was conferred, either on the "distinguished" men themselves, or by them on the "bishops and deacons." We can only suppose that the normal "matter" was employed. But the main principles, that no one must minister except by Apostolic authority, and that the Apostles themselves arranged for this authority to be conferred by the method of *succession through specified persons*, seem to be clearly stated by our author.

But what was St. Clement's own position? One thing is clear: the name of bishop as distinct from presbyter can hardly have been in use in Rome by the end of the first century. His use of the words as equivalents seems to prove that; and we have to notice that St. Ignatius, the great champion of the rights of the single bishop, does not mention a "bishop" at all in his letter to the Roman Church almost twenty years later.<sup>1</sup>

But the real question is whether or no he possessed

<sup>1</sup> St. Clement's namesake of Alexandria, a century later still, refers to him as "the Apostle" (*Strom.* iv. 17, 105), and nothing could be more natural than that the successor of St. Peter and St. Paul should be known by that title.



the position and powers—though not yet the name—of bishop in the Roman Church. Tradition asserts very clearly that he was individually Bishop of Rome. This tradition was already beyond dispute when St. Irenæus, towards the end of the second century, appealed to the Roman succession of bishops as a cardinal point in his argument “Against Heresies.” Hegesippus (c. A.D. 160) quite clearly believed himself to be in possession of a catalogue of Roman bishops going back to the Apostles, in which Clement holds the third place. St. Ignatius, though he has no occasion to mention the bishop, can hardly have been ignorant of the fact, if it was a fact, that the polity of the Roman Church was simply presbyterian; and it is impossible to suppose that he would knowingly have poured out eulogies on that Church as he does if there had been something which from his own standpoint was fatally wrong with its constitution.

On the other side we have a document which from internal evidence would appear to be contemporary, the well-known *Shepherd* written by a very minor prophet named Hermas. According to this, the situation in Rome is the same as that which we saw to be probable at Corinth. The government of the Church is in the hands of “rulers” and “presbyters,” who are clearly distinguished from each other. The only suggestion of one outstanding individual is the statement that it is “Clement’s” duty to circulate the prophecies of Hermas to foreign cities. We shall find in the course of our enquiries that one of the most conspicuous functions of a diocesan bishop is that of representing his diocese to other Churches: and we may naturally consider this behest of the prophet as an indication that the Roman Church had already its *persona*, or representative, so far as its external relations were concerned.

It is very difficult to reconcile the evidence of

Ignatius, Hegesippus, Irenæus, and Tertullian on one side with that of Hermas on the other. If we could be sure of the date of Hermas,<sup>1</sup> it would be easier to estimate his value. But the doubt in this matter really only affects our conclusion as to the evolution of the "monarchical episcopate." If we accept the *Shepherd* at its face value and as belonging to the last decade of the first century, it does not point to Presbyterianism pure and simple; but to a form of presbyterian government in which the simple presbyters have over them a more exalted order of "rulers."<sup>2</sup>

### D. St. Ignatius of Antioch.

The testimony of St. Ignatius is of vital importance, and as far as it goes it is of overwhelming weight. As far as it goes: for we get no information from him as to the method by which bishops were appointed or endowed with their authority. For that we must look to other sources.<sup>3</sup> But what Ignatius seems to

<sup>1</sup> Our only piece of external evidence, the Muratorian Fragment, dates it a whole generation later than the martyrdom of St. Ignatius. There is no agreement among scholars as to which date should be accepted.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Streeter has an extraordinarily ingenious theory to account for the sudden establishment of diocesan episcopacy in Rome. He suggests that St. Ignatius had himself won a difficult victory for "moniscopacy" in his own city of Antioch and had succeeded in ousting the more primitive Antiochene arrangement of government by "prophets and teachers." He was misled by a sentence in St. Clement's letter to Corinth which seemed to suggest the equivalence of the Christian bishop and the Jewish high priest. This is the explanation of the encomiums which he showers on the Roman Church. On arrival in Rome he must have been bitterly disappointed. But so great was the combined influence of his own prophetic gifts and of his martyr's crown that from that time onwards Rome accepted one-man rule.

But Dr. Streeter acknowledges that "there must certainly have been at Rome some one person who, whatever his powers in regard to the other presbyters of his own Church, was at least the head of it in the sense of being its official representative in dealing with external Churches" (*The Primitive Church*, pp. 221 ff.)

<sup>3</sup> But there is one piece of evidence of a negative character to be derived from Ignatius. He certainly speaks as though after his own

prove is the fact that a localised monarchical episcopate had become firmly rooted in the Church by the year A.D. 115. By "monarchical" is not, of course, meant the possession of absolute sway. Autocracy is no part of the Catholic episcopal idea. All that is implied is the sharp differentiation between the minister whom Ignatius calls the "bishop" and the group of presbyters (no longer called bishops) who surrounded him. No doubt the Ignatian bishop was in truth the pastor of a small flock scattered about in a heathen city, and by no means the governor of a large number of congregations, each with its own parish priest and spread over a wide tract of country. The situation implied by the letters of Ignatius has nothing to do with prelacy or outward dignity. A bishop at the beginning of the second century was more often like the Bishop of Accra than the Bishop of Winchester.<sup>1</sup> The point is simply that the authority which at first had been exercised on a world-wide scale by the Apostles, and afterwards apparently by delegates who acted under their commission, was now everywhere being localised. The transition stage of local "governors," peripatetic "apostles," and a specially commissioned aristocracy of "distinguished men" has well-nigh passed away. Authority is being concentrated in the hands of a single representative in every Church. Externally the change is enormous. Authority is on the spot

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martyrdom the Church of Antioch would lack an earthly bishop. Its bishop for a time will be Jesus Christ (*Ad Rom.* 9). This certainly suggests that something more than the mere choice of the Syrian presbyters will be needed for his successor. They will in due course have a bishop given them, but there is no indication that they can, so to say, produce one for themselves. The neighbouring bishops and other clergy will, he expects, make their way to Antioch after he has gone: it can hardly be doubted that he thinks of them as providing for the succession in the vacant see (see Gore, *The Church and the Ministry*, p. 271 n.).

<sup>1</sup> This does not apply to the position of Ignatius himself. There do not seem to have been any other bishops in Syria.

instead of at a distance. The position of the simple presbyter has become much more completely subordinate. He will recover a large measure of independence as the centuries pass, but for the present he has become a mere attendant on the bishop, or at best his delegate and representative. But there has been no change of principle. From the beginning the principle has been that of delegation. The extent and the method of that delegation are matters of expediency on which the Church may be guided by circumstances to change, and to change again. But the constant feature throughout is this: there is no ministerial authority but the Apostolic authority, and no valid ministry except by the delegation of it.

According to St. Ignatius, "no church is named"<sup>1</sup> without the three orders of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. A "church," that is to say, in the local sense, is constituted by the fact that it has a bishop (as well as the two lower orders). If there are organised groups of Christians anywhere who have not yet obtained a bishop, they cannot be called "churches." They may, of course, be in communion with the "Catholic Church," an expression which appears for the first time in St. Ignatius; for we cannot imagine that he would have wished to deny the churchmanship of, *e.g.*, the Christians of Corinth at the date of St. Clement's letter; but it certainly seems as though he would have declined to speak of the "Church of Corinth" if, as we have seen to be probable, there was not then any local bishop in that city. It cannot be denied that the Ignatian position in this respect is revolutionary. There is nothing new in the contention that the ministry must be in touch with the original Apostolic authority, however mediated: that is common ground to all our early witnesses. The novelty is in the stress he lays on the localisation of this authority in

<sup>1</sup> *Ad Trall.* 3.

the person of one bishop to each Church. But the evidence of Ignatius cannot be set aside on this ground. We are not here dealing with an obscure document of uncertain provenance like the *Teaching* of the Twelve Apostles. Antioch, the see city of the martyr bishop, "had been within the memory of living men the fountain-head of Gentile Christianity, and the very birth-place of the Christian name."<sup>1</sup> His writings are in the form of letters to the various Churches of Asia and to that of Rome. He is on his way to martyrdom, and is giving his final exhortations to those who looked up to him as one of the greatest teachers of his time. There is no mistaking the tone of authority in which he writes. All seems impossible of explanation unless he has behind him something greater than a Church "movement" towards the setting up of monarchical episcopacy. Few traditions seem more likely to be firmly based than that which asserts that he had been a disciple of the Apostle St. John. If that is true, everything fits into place. Ignatius was simply endorsing the behest of the last of the Apostles, who had been led to see that in future the Apostolic authority must not be left to the casual visitation of wandering delegates, however "distinguished," but must be definitely localised wherever there was a permanent group of Christians.

Certainly nothing could exceed the majesty with which in St. Ignatius' thought the episcopal office is surrounded. If the presbyters are like the Apostles, the bishop is like God.<sup>2</sup> "That is to be held a valid

<sup>1</sup> Whitham, *Holy Orders*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, as Dr. Gore points out in *The Church and the Ministry*, pp. 269, 270, the allusion is to the period of our Lord's ministry. After the Ascension the Apostles are themselves the representatives of God, and this position, according to Ignatius, is shared by the episcopate. Otherwise we should be making Ignatius contradict himself by assigning to the bishops a position superior to that of the Apostles themselves. His actual opinion is, of course, the very opposite of this (see *ad Rom.* 4).



(Βεβαία) Eucharist which is under the bishop, or one to whom he shall have committed it. . . . It is not lawful, apart from the bishop, either to baptise or to hold a love-feast.”<sup>1</sup> “We ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself.”<sup>2</sup>

### *E. St. Polycarp.*

There is a letter in existence written by St. Polycarp (c. A.D. 116) to the Christians of Philippi, according to which it seems that there was no bishop at Philippi, only presbyters and deacons. But as the correspondence arose directly out of the visit of St. Ignatius, it seems impossible to suppose that if there were really something profoundly wrong with the organisation of the Philippian Church from the Ignatian point of view, no trace should appear in Polycarp’s letter of any criticism either on the part of Ignatius or of Polycarp himself: for it must be remembered that Polycarp represents the same “Johannine” tradition as Ignatius. It is easier to suppose either with Moberly<sup>3</sup> that the see was vacant, or, perhaps more probably, that Philippi was still in the same status as Corinth had been twenty years earlier, dependent on visiting bishops, or on the bishop of the nearest large city. It is no longer an anachronism to speak of “bishops,” for it is clear from St. Polycarp’s letter that by this date “bishop” is no longer the equivalent of “elder.”

### *F. The Church of Alexandria.*

There is a certain amount of evidence for a very peculiar state of affairs at Alexandria for the first two centuries of its existence. There is no doubt at all that from the earliest times the Alexandrian Church

<sup>1</sup> *Ad Smyrn.* 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ad Eph.* 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 205.



had three separate degrees of ministry. To St. Clement of Alexandria, writing about A.D. 200,<sup>1</sup> the difference between bishop and presbyter is so axiomatic that he seems to think that in Holy Scripture also they must have meant two offices and not one. But according to St. Jerome (about A.D. 400) the bishop was not consecrated by other bishops, but merely nominated by his fellow-presbyters. This at least is what he appears to mean, and this is the sense put upon his words by other writers of the West. The change to normal episcopacy was made, he says, about A.D. 240. Other authors of later date seem to provide some confirmation of his statements. For all that, however, there is the gravest doubt whether he may not have been mistaken. For on the one hand we know that shortly before the date of Jerome's letter demonstrably false accusations of not having been episcopally ordained were being made by the Arians against *contemporary* Bishops of Alexandria, a fact which suggests that the authority which Jerome was following may have been some Arian *canard*; and on the other there is the weighty consideration that the evidence of Origen, who, if the story is true, was intimately associated with the Alexandrian Church at the very time when the drastic alteration was being carried out, betrays no sign whatever that he knew of anything unusual in the character of the local arrangements during the former half of the third century or of any revolutionary changes in the middle of it. His language about the position of the bishop really does seem to be inconsistent with Jerome's favourite theory that there is no ultimate difference between a bishop and a presbyter.

The statement, then, is too doubtful to build a theory on. Even if it were proved it would not

<sup>1</sup> "There are . . . suggestions in the sacred books . . . some to presbyters, some to bishops and deacons" (*Pæd.* iii. 12, 97, quoted by Dr. Gore).

sustain the thesis either that the right to consecrate a bishop is inherent in the presbyterate or that the bishop is merely the president of a group of presbyters. All that could be said would be that a certain group of presbyters were ordained on the understanding that any one of them was potentially a bishop. In the language of the Western Church, we should have to say that their Ordination was really a Consecration to the episcopate, but that only one of them received the necessary jurisdiction to enable him to exercise episcopal functions. But the primitive Church, which drew no clear-cut distinctions between order and jurisdiction, would not have considered them as bishops at all until they had received the right to minister as such. Modern Western language does not accurately express the primitive frame of mind. It would be more in accordance with the spirit of the primitive Church to say that at Alexandria the supreme ministerial power was held by a group rather than an individual, and that this group appointed one of its members to act for it in specifically episcopal functions. In that case we might go on to say that there is no reason in the nature of things why such a plan should not have been pursued everywhere; but that in fact the evidence points the other way. But the theory would have nothing to do with any supposed inherent rights in the presbyterate: it would merely mean that the original Apostolic or quasi-Apostolic authority<sup>1</sup> had conferred the supreme ministerial power on a group instead of an individual. As soon as the change to the normal arrangement took place it would become obvious that presbyters were *not* being ordained to hold even potentially the supreme position except by means of consecration.

In any case, so uncertain a piece of history is quite insufficient to give *validity* (in its proper sense of *security*) to any revolutionary method of conferring

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark, according to a credible tradition.

Holy Orders in later centuries. It is one thing to say that the Apostolic founder of the Alexandrian Church may possibly have arranged that the supreme power in regard to Ordination should be held in commission. It is quite another to assert that any group of presbyters, ordained on the understanding that they have nothing to do with the transmission of Holy Orders, should take on themselves to empower one of their own number to act as a bishop. Still less should we be justified in asserting that any one presbyter, who had not been so empowered, could validly ordain a layman either as presbyter or bishop.

### G. Summary.

What, then, are our certainties and what our uncertainties as to this obscure period?

Our first certainty, and one of profound importance, is that little as we may know about the exact apportionment of ministerial authority in the primitive Church, it is perfectly clear that there *was* a ministry rigidly distinguished from lay membership in the Church. Whatever doubts may be raised about the nature of the dividing line, there was a dividing line.

Secondly, it was not a mere question of election or recognition. Even the *Teaching* does not suggest that, and St. Clement's letter rules it out. The whole point of that letter is that the laity have not the authority to turn out their clergy and appoint new ones. Their consent had been obtained to the original appointment: but they had not given them their authority and they could not take it away.

Thirdly, the supreme position of one minister in each city, distinguished as *the* bishop, is not invariable. Speaking generally, it is earlier in the East than in the West.

4 But the Western (Petro-Pauline) tradition, as set forth by St. Clement, does not seem to be that the ministry is simply self-propagating in the sense that the presbyters of any Church are a kind of committee with power to add to their number, but that certain specified persons have authority derived from the original Apostles to confer the ministerial position on others, after obtaining the consent of those to whom they are to minister.

About other things we must perforce be content with less than certainty. We cannot prove that those who were known as "apostles" in the secondary sense were consecrated by the imposition of the hands of the original Apostles. We do not know whether the prophets were ordained, or if their ministry was treated as self-authenticated. We know nothing about St. Clement's "distinguished men." Were they a group within the Corinthian Church who had joint authority to ordain presbyters? Or were they travelling Apostolic delegates with individual authority? Nor can we get to the bottom of St. Jerome's story about the arrangements at Alexandria. It is possible, though hardly likely, that we have here another variety of the Petro-Pauline tradition, which differs from that which we found at Corinth in that the unit of ministerial authority is the group of presbyters acting through their chief.

Finally, we cannot deny that there is a conflict of evidence as to the position in Rome at the end of the first century, and that there is a real difficulty in determining the weight which should be given to the very curious document called *The Shepherd*.

Yet, giving the opposite side the benefit of every reasonable, or even unreasonable, doubt, three positions emerge which seem to have a decisive bearing on present-day problems :

1. All ministry rests ultimately on Apostolic authority.

2. Only those can transmit this authority who have themselves received authority to do so.

3. In regard to jurisdiction, the ministry of the Church crystallises almost immediately into its normal form of one bishop to each place, with presbyters and deacons depending on him. This crystallisation took place under Apostolic authority almost certainly in Asia Minor, and probably also in Rome.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHURCH OF THE EARLY FATHERS

WE emerge from the "tunnel" with St. Irenæus, whose life covers the last three-quarters of the second century. We have already had occasion to refer to his authority in an historical matter which belongs to the last chapter—the statement, that is, that St. Clement was Bishop of Rome in the full "monarchical" sense. We now have to consider his testimony to the beliefs of his own time on the matter of episcopal succession and authority. It is a testimony which cannot be lightly set aside. He tells us that he was a disciple of St. Polycarp, "who had been appointed a bishop by Apostles." From Asia he went to Rome, and from Rome to Lyons. While at Lyons he remained in close touch with Rome. His personal history, then, makes him an ideal witness for the beliefs of the Church during the crucial period of the development of the ministry. He is a link between the Johannine tradition of Asia Minor and the Petro-Pauline tradition of Rome. His subsequent episcopate in Gaul enables him to preserve a certain detachment of mind and prevents him from being hypnotised by any mere local Roman reading of history.

St. Irenæus is our earliest witness to the great stress laid by the primitive Church on Apostolic succession through a line of bishops. But at this point we must distinguish two different senses in which the phrase "Apostolic Succession" is used. We may use it to express succession in office or succession in grace. For example, we may say that Ingram succeeds Creighton, and Creighton succeeds Temple, and Temple succeeds Tait in the see of London. Or

we may say that Ingram was consecrated by Temple, and Temple by Jackson,<sup>1</sup> and Jackson by Sumner. It is the former sense of Apostolic succession to which St. Irenæus bears witness. His primary interest is in doctrine rather than in Church government. He emphasises continuity of office in order to prove continuity of doctrine. "We can enumerate," he says, "those who by the Apostles were appointed bishops in the Churches, and the successions" (or "successors") "of them even to our own time." He speaks of "those presbyters who have succession from the Apostles . . . who together with the succession in the episcopate have received the certain gift of truth."<sup>2</sup> As an illustration he gives the actual list of Bishops of Rome, beginning with Linus, "to whom the blessed Apostles" (St. Peter and St. Paul) "entrusted the ministry of the episcopate."<sup>3</sup>

St. Irenæus is not here enunciating the doctrine of Apostolic succession in the sense in which it is now most commonly used, the sense, that is, of the transmission of Order from consecrator to consecrated. But what is demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt is that St. Irenæus could appeal without fear of contradiction to the tradition of a single episcopal head in every Church. It is shown that every Church with which Irenæus was acquainted was episcopally governed and believed itself to have been so from the beginning: but it says nothing as to the means by which a man became a bishop. He is very emphatic as to episcopacy being of the *bene esse* of the Church: was it not the clinching argument against heretical teaching? But there is nothing in his teaching to prove that it is of the *esse*.

The case is very different with regard to our other great second-century authority, Tertullian. We cannot, indeed, take our stand upon Tertullian's personal

<sup>1</sup> Acting, of course, under the authority of Tait, the Archbishop.

<sup>2</sup> *Adv. Hær.* iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ap. Eus.* H.E. v. 6.

opinions. In later life he lapsed into schism, and used all the resources of his blazing rhetoric to vilify the Catholic hierarchy and the theory on which it was based. But as a witness to what was axiomatic in the religious thought of his time he is unimpeachable; and he is very far from confining the appeal to Apostolic succession to the merely official sense of the phrase. He, too, is arguing with heretics, and appeals to the unbroken succession of the bishops as his most convincing argument. "Let them declare the origins of their Churches, let them unfold the succession of their bishops, so coming down from the beginning that the first bishop may have had as his *consecrator* (*auctorem*) and predecessor one of the Apostles or Apostolic men. . . . For in this way the Apostolic Churches bring down their accounts, as the Church of the Smyrneans goes back to Polycarp, who was appointed by John, and as the Church of the Romans to Clement, who was *consecrated* (*ordinatum*) by Peter. In exactly the same way also the other Churches show their founders, whom, as having been appointed by Apostles, they regard as transmitting the Apostolic seed" (*apostolici seminis traduces*).<sup>1</sup> This is most unnatural language to use if he *merely* means that there is a succession of office from predecessor to successor. That no doubt is what he chiefly has in mind, for it is on that that his argument depends. But his actual phraseology implies that the thought of authority transmitted by consecration was in the back of his mind. *Succession in Grace*

Tertullian's language in later life does not really neutralise his earlier convictions. On becoming a Montanist he did not actually contradict his former attitude towards episcopacy. It still remained for him what it had been before: only it faded into insignificance in comparison with the intoxicating revelation which seemed to have been vouchsafed

<sup>1</sup> *De Præscr.* 32.

to the Montanistic prophets. If, as he came to believe, a new dispensation had been inaugurated by the recent prophesyings, the merely hierarchical authority of bishops must take a back seat. They might still be "transmitters of the Apostolic seed," but in view of the new prophetic outburst the Apostolic seed mattered very little indeed. If an Anglo-Catholic were impelled to join the Salvation Army, he might see no reason to revise his former belief in the Apostolic succession as an historical fact, but in view of his wonderful new experiences the whole thing would seem to him of very little importance. He might be very angry with the bishops: but that would not be because they believed themselves to be the successors of the Apostles, but because, in spite of that claim, they failed to recognise the gifts of the Spirit displayed by the enthusiasts of the new community. The case of Tertullian is not very different. He does not complain of the bishops for being bishops, but for the way in which they exercise their office. The bishops are what they were before, but they have failed to accept the new revelations, and are therefore practically superseded: there is now a Church of the Spirit to which the Church of the bishops must give place.

In all this there is absolutely no attempt to preserve the ancient traditions of the Church. Rigidly orthodox as Tertullian is in matters of doctrine, he is avowedly an innovator in matters of order. The old episcopal discipline is for him the enemy. There is therefore no force in the argument sometimes used to the effect that Tertullian's Montanism is really a revival of an earlier system in which supreme authority rested with unordained prophets. The period of the Gospel was, he says, the hot youth of mankind: it is only now, under the *new* dispensation of the prophets (the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, as Tertullian believed it to be), that it is for the first time coming

to the strength of full manhood.<sup>1</sup> Tertullian does not really wish to get rid of the Apostolic ministry, but it is only natural that in his Montanist phase he is inclined to treat it as of secondary importance. As a Catholic he had complained bitterly of the casualness of the Gnostic in regard to the ministry. "One is a bishop today, another tomorrow; the reader of tomorrow is a deacon today; the layman of tomorrow a presbyter today. For they impose even on laymen the functions of the priesthood."<sup>2</sup> As a Montanist he uses very different language. There is, he suggests, no ultimate difference between cleric and layman. In an emergency "you" (the layman), "both offer and baptise: you are your own priest."<sup>3</sup> This can hardly be treated seriously as evidence of a practice of laymen consecrating the Eucharist even in an emergency. Such a practice could hardly have left no other trace in literature. It may be no more than a Tertullianesque way of describing the contemporary custom of laymen reserving the sacrament for themselves and communicating themselves at their own discretion. But, of course, it is possible that the Montanists' indignation with the official clergy led them on occasions to show that they could do without them. Like John Wesley's travelling preachers, though on very different grounds, the Montanists may have claimed the right to celebrate when no priest could be found.<sup>4</sup>

There is one point on which we have not hitherto had any really decisive evidence: How was the bishop consecrated? We may claim to have established the general principle that the Christian ministry is successive. Our Lord appointed the Apostles with the full ministerial authority, and they delegated this authority to others, so that the Church is still divided,

<sup>1</sup> *De Virg. Vel.* 1.

<sup>2</sup> *De Præscr.* 41.

<sup>3</sup> *De Exhort. Cast.* 7.

<sup>4</sup> See Gore, *op. cit.*, pp. 186 ff.



as it has always been, by a clear and sharp line into ministers and layfolk. Further, we have seen that the evidence leads us to believe that there is a certain specialised class among the presbyters who alone have the right to appoint, or ordain, new presbyters and deacons. The Twelve have this right, and their delegates of the class of St. Timothy and St. Titus, and the "distinguished men" referred to by St. Clement. Nor can it be doubted that with the institution of diocesan episcopacy the right of ordaining presbyters and deacons passed to the diocesan bishop. There is no trace anywhere of ordination of presbyters by mere presbyters.<sup>1</sup> But it must not, therefore, be simply taken for granted that the bishop was always consecrated by other bishops. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that bishops are not a separate Order, but merely the presidents of the groups of presbyters, though with the sole right of ordaining new presbyters and deacons. It could in that case be supposed that each group of presbyters might have the right, not only of electing, but also

<sup>1</sup> Instances have been alleged, but they break down hopelessly. Thus it is said that St. Cyprian (of all people) bears witness to presbyteral ordination, when he states that the presbyter Novatus "constituted" (*constituit*) Felicissimus a deacon (*Ep.* lii. 2). But in the same letter he speaks of his "making" Felicissimus a deacon and "making" Novatian a bishop. In regard to the latter case we have independent evidence that Novatian was in fact consecrated by three bishops (see p. 56). It is therefore evident that St. Cyprian does not mean that Novatus himself either ordained the one or consecrated the other, but merely that he *procured* their elevation (Gore, *The Church and the Ministry*, p. 333).

So Cassian speaks of a certain abbot promoting a monk to the honour of the presbyterate. But it is really impossible to suppose that anyone writing about an affair of the patriarchate of Alexandria in the fifth century, which is Cassian's period, should mean anything so absurd. It was notorious that a presbyter had been deprived of his alleged orders a century before in the same patriarchate on the ground that he had been ordained by a presbyter. The possibility of such a thing is explained by Dr. Gore by the supposition that the ordainer in this latter case had as a fact been consecrated as a bishop, but that his consecration was treated as invalid on the ground that he was a schismatic (*op. cit.*, pp. 120, 121).



of consecrating their own bishop.<sup>1</sup> The position would then be not unlike that of the Papacy. The Pope, when once made, has (according to Roman Catholic canon law) supreme authority, yet in the nature of things he cannot be made Pope by another Pope. The creation of the Pope has for many centuries been a matter of election by a college of whom the large majority need not even be bishops. Or we might compare the position of the head of a religious Order. When once he has been appointed, all other appointments depend on his pleasure: but he himself is appointed democratically by the members of the Order. Is it, then, possible that the early episcopate was of this nature?

We have already seen certain indications which would lead us to give a negative answer. St. Timothy and St. Titus, the prototypes of the diocesan bishop, were clearly delegates of St. Paul, and owed their quasi-Apostolic position to him, with the power of Ordination which went with it. Whatever grace may have been given "with the laying on of hands of the presbytery," they rule and ordain as Apostolic delegates, not as elected officials. St. Ignatius seems to imply that his see of Antioch will remain vacant for a time after his death. Tertullian's language about the Apostolic seed is far more pointed and accurate if the "seed" has always passed from bishop to bishop by Consecration. St. Jerome's story about the Alexandrian custom is itself evidence that from about 250 onwards the bishop was consecrated by other bishops, and also that, even if the story is true, Alexandria was until 250 specially noticeable as a unique exception to the general rule. But we have seen that his statement is open to grave doubt on

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested above (p. 23) that St. Paul's object in sending for St. Timothy and St. Mark to Rome was to give them what would afterwards have been called the metropolitical power to consecrate other bishops. But, of course, there is no real evidence for this.

the score of contemporary evidence of a negative kind.

It must, however, be acknowledged that there is no absolutely decisive evidence about this particular point until the third century.<sup>1</sup> To that date it seems that we can now assign with some confidence the so-called "Egyptian Church Order," which is not really Egyptian at all, but in all probability the work of St. Hippolytus of Rome, and written in the early part of the third century. This is what the Order says :

"Let a bishop be ordained after being chosen by all the people. And when the nomination has been made and has been acceptable to all, the people shall assemble, together with the presbytery and such bishops as shall be present on the Lord's Day. When all give consent let them lay hands on him, and let the presbytery stand by quietly, but let all keep silence, praying in their heart for the descent of the Holy Spirit. After which let one of the bishops present, at the request of all, laying his hand on him, pray aloud as follows. . ."<sup>2</sup>

A recension of the same Church Order which appears to be more than a century later, the so-called "Canons of Hippolytus," has, amongst others, the very curious variation that the person who lays on his hands is to be "one from among the bishops and presbyters." It seems almost impossible to understand this, for by this time, the middle of the fourth century, there can no longer be any conceivable doubt as to the rule that bishops must be consecrated by bishops. The canon of the Council of Arles (A.D. 314), which orders that at least three bishops shall take part in every Consecration, would alone

<sup>1</sup> The lists of the successions in the great sees do not really prove anything more than the fact that they were naturally very proud of the fact that their first bishops were appointed by Apostles.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Gore's translation.

be sufficient to prove this. Further, we must notice that the canons themselves refer to the Consecration of a bishop as "Ordination," and that they distinctly state that no one but a bishop may ordain. Therefore, if they do really state that a bishop can be consecrated by a presbyter they simply contradict themselves.

The only way of reconciling the canons with themselves is to suppose that "bishops and presbyters" means "those who are both bishops and presbyters." There is some evidence that somewhat earlier than this the term presbyter was used to include bishops. Both St. Irenæus and St. Clement of Alexandria speak of bishops as "presbyters."

But it is worth pointing out that while the "Canons of Hippolytus" were written originally in Greek, translated into Coptic, and then again into Arabic, it is only the Arabic version and a further translation into Latin that we possess, and it seems obvious that something may have gone wrong with one of the translations.

The Apostolic Constitutions, a few years later still, appear also to be based on the Church Order. They say that a bishop is to be ordained by two or three other bishops. Curiously enough, they do not mention the laying on of hands at the critical moment. But elsewhere they clearly state that bishops as well as presbyters and deacons are ordained "by prayer and laying on of hands."

About twenty years later than the first edition of the Church Order (A.D. 251), we have the clearest possible evidence from St. Cyprian that only bishops could consecrate bishops. He tells us how the schismatical Bishop Novatian was consecrated in a clandestine and unseemly way in the evening after a meal by "three bishops, boorish and most foolish men."<sup>1</sup> So also he tells us of Cornelius being con-

<sup>1</sup> *Cornel. ap. Euseb. vi. 43.*

secrated as Bishop of Rome by other bishops.<sup>1</sup> His own view was that all the bishops of the province should assemble for a consecration.

There is no need to carry the evidence any further. Quite clearly in St. Cyprian's time the custom is established and there is no memory of any contrary tradition.

Such are the facts. It is no doubt possible to interpret them as pointing to a change from a system of deriving episcopal authority from election to one of deriving it from episcopal consecration. All that we can say is that it seems in the highest degree unlikely that so great a change should have been carried out in all parts of the Church so swiftly and so quietly as to leave no trace behind it.

Something must be said about the strange abnormality of treating as presbyters those who had confessed Christ and suffered in the persecutions. According to the "Egyptian Church Order," which, it will be remembered, is not really an Egyptian but a Roman document, if anyone has really suffered for Christ in the persecutions, he may be admitted to the presbyterate without Ordination, unless, indeed, he happens to be a slave, in which case (no doubt for legal reasons) he must receive the imposition of hands. But for the episcopate he must in any case receive the imposition of hands as usual. Students of Church history will remember the difficulties which the confessors created for St. Cyprian at Carthage. For some fifty or more years before the probable date of the Church Order a custom had been growing up of allowing confessors or prospective martyrs to recommend to mercy those who were under censure for their sins. The custom grew apace, and in St. Cyprian's time amounted to a crying scandal; only comparable to that caused by Tetzels in the sixteenth century. Tickets were made out in the form "Let

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* lv. 8.

X. . . . be admitted to Communion," distributed broadcast, and even sold for money. The final stage was reached when one of the confessors wrote a letter to Cyprian announcing that they had decided to grant reconciliation to all who had lapsed in persecution, and commanding the bishops to restore them to Communion. It is obvious that we are dealing with an abuse;<sup>1</sup> and we may notice that in the later form of the Church Order called the Apostolic Constitutions this whole business of admitting confessors to the presbyterate without Ordination has been abolished. It must be noticed also that presbyterate is not necessarily the same as priesthood in the sacerdotal sense. In the third century it was probably very rare for the presbyters to "offer the gifts," as the presbyter-bishops of old days had done. That was conspicuously the duty of the bishop as such. The presbyters had become the bishops' council: his assessors both in liturgy and in jurisdiction. Certainly Cyprian speaks of them as "conjoined with the bishop in the sacerdotal office," and Tertullian assigns to them "sacerdotal functions": moreover, in very early times it was the custom for them to concelebrate with the bishop—that is to say, to stand with him at the altar and lay their hands on the oblation. But in Cyprian's idiom the word "priest" (*sacerdos*) means a bishop, and it is noticeable that presbyters began to be called priests roughly about the same time as parishes began to be formed and put under the government of members of the second order. Obviously it would then become necessary for them to celebrate the holy Sacrifice, and so it would also become natural to call them priests. When, therefore, we hear that a confessor at a certain date became a presbyter by virtue of his faithful witness, that need not necessarily mean that he was

<sup>1</sup> We may compare the fourth century abuse of deacons purporting to say Mass, which had to be forbidden by the Council of Arles.

allowed to celebrate. In any case, he could only have done so by the bishop's special licence, and the fact that the episcopate could never be acquired by a confessor without Consecration strongly suggests that the presbyterate to which the confessor was admitted was more of an honorary rank than an order in the technical sense. It was an abuse certainly, but not what in later times would have seemed an obvious sacrilege.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As an illustration we may compare the present custom in the Orthodox Church of giving certain persons the rank of arch-priest, without any intention of conferring an Order thereby. Normally the person so honoured is already an Orthodox priest, and he is given this position by the ceremony of laying on of hands. In order to distinguish this laying on of hands from that by which a Holy Order is given the ceremony takes place outside the sanctuary. But there are three Anglican priests who have received the rank of arch-priest purely as an honour without any imposition of hands, and, of course, without any right of celebrating the Orthodox liturgy.



## CHAPTER V

### THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE

OUR survey of the early centuries seems to show that a clear and fixed ministry is part of the Apostolic inheritance of the Church. The ministry is Apostolic, not only in the sense that it is derived from the Apostles as founders of the various local Churches, but far more profoundly in the fact that it succeeds in essentials to the Apostolic office itself. This is not to say that there is no difference between an Apostle and a bishop ; but that the similarity is far more important than the difference. The very fact that in the first and second centuries the word "apostle" is used loosely for others besides the original Eleven indicates that the essential character of the apostolate was thought of as transmissible. St. Paul and St. Matthias are no doubt to be grouped with the Eleven as possessors of incommunicable privilege. Like the Eleven, they are the official witnesses of the Resurrection on whose testimony the rest of the Church must for ever depend. St. Paul (and presumably St. Matthias also), like the Eleven, claims a plenary authority both more individual and more universal than that of the later ordinary ministry of the Church. But the fact that such people as St. Barnabas, or far more clearly Andronicus and Junias, and the peripatetic ministers who appear on the elusive pages of the *Teaching*, are called apostles, seems to show that in the mind of the primitive Church the apostolate was not thought of only as a position of remote or incommunicable dignity, but also as supplying something that the Church would always stand in need of.

Lightfoot, in a famous sentence, asserts that " the

episcopate was formed, not out of the Apostolic order by localisation, but out of the presbyteral by elevation."<sup>1</sup> The first bishops, according to Lightfoot, were the presidents of the various presbyteral colleges, who at a very early date obtained a unique and representative position. This may well be true, but as Moberly justly points out, the question is, Who elevated them, and on what authority?<sup>2</sup> The apostles, like the prophets and perhaps the teachers, were essentially a roving ministry. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons belonged to some particular place. In the second century this localised ministry universally takes the place of the earlier roving one. As long as the roving apostles still existed, the local ministry might often consist of presbyters and deacons only. As the roving ministry came to an end, there appeared in every Church with singular unanimity and within a very short time a separate order of "bishops." No doubt these bishops are also presbyters, and were usually ordained as such before they were advanced to the episcopate, but for many years the difference between a bishop and a presbyter is far more conspicuous than the fact that they share a common presbyterate. As soon as the individual bishop appears, he is at once the supremely important person. Nothing less like a gradual acquisition of power could possibly be imagined. The group of presbyter-bishops had always, as we have seen, looked away from themselves to those in authority over them: but until the arrival of the single bishop they occupy a comparatively independent position. Now, according to Lightfoot, one of their number in every place suddenly, within a single generation, becomes all-important, and the remainder are reduced to the level of his counsellors and assistants. We may assume that this was what was needed for the good of the Church at

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on Philippians*, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 119.

the moment, but we cannot avoid the conclusion that the change must have been carried out by the fiat of some authority which was altogether beyond cavil. The powers of the bishop, as they are shown to us by St. Ignatius in Asia in the second century, or by St. Cyprian in Africa in the third, are far beyond any natural rights inherent in the chairman of a board. We are faced in essence by a localisation of the Apostolic power, even though in fact it did not come about by any of the "Apostles" (in either sense) settling down to govern a particular church. All tradition is in favour of the theory that the Apostles appointed the first bishops of the great sees, and it appears to be an accurate description to say that these first bishops exercised locally the same authority as the Apostles had wielded over a wider area. So far from it being true that we witness a gradual extension of the powers of the episcopate, there is far more difference between a bishop and a presbyter in the second century than in the third, and in the third than in the fourth. When once the rule of the individual bishop has been established, further development is along the lines of delegation from the bishop downwards. It is not until the fourth century that the word priest (*sacerdos*) is regularly used for the second Order. As we have already seen, to St. Cyprian *sacerdos* means a bishop.

Once suppose that the Apostles founded the institution of the episcopate as distinguished from the presbyterate and all becomes comprehensible. It would mean that the presiding presbyters received that authority which had hitherto been reserved to the Apostles, and it would be natural enough to express the new situation by reserving to them the more dignified of the two titles which the general group of presbyters had hitherto borne. In future they, and they alone, would be "bishops," the others would remain "presbyters," and no more. The

resulting situation can be well expressed in the statement that there are three Holy Orders—those of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. But the question of the learned St. Jerome can still be pertinently asked: “What does a bishop do that a presbyter does not do, except ordination?”<sup>1</sup> The answer is not precisely “Nothing,” but may be given in the words of the “Canons of Hippolytus” (c. A.D. 330): “The bishop is to be on the same level with the presbyter in all respects except in the matter of *the throne* and ordination, for the power of ordaining is not committed to the latter.” The bishop is something more than a presbyter with the power of ordination: he is the *presiding* presbyter, as St. Jerome would, of course, have acknowledged. But it is well to remember that in spite of the extreme differentiation between the offices of bishop and presbyter in the second and third centuries, there has been an alternative tradition that the two offices are fundamentally identical.<sup>2</sup> This tradition, revived by St. Jerome, had a great influence on many of the schoolmen, who developed a theory that the highest of the Holy Orders was the priesthood, and that it was held in two grades—the episcopate and the presbyterate. The three Holy Orders thus become, rather surprisingly, priesthood, diaconate, subdiaconate. It would have been more logical to say that the diaconate, like the priesthood, is held in two grades, the full diaconate and the subdiaconate: but the schoolmen were rather apt to be hypnotised by sacred numbers.

Perhaps the truth might best be expressed thus: The Apostles first instituted the presbyterate. Afterwards they (or some of them) endowed the presiding presbyters with Apostolic powers so ample that the ordinary presbyterate seemed to be depressed to the

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 146.

<sup>2</sup> Thus St. Irenæus in A.D. 191 writes of the early Popes as “presbyters.” Cf. *St. Pet.* v. 1.

position of mere assessors. But subsequent analysis showed that the episcopal order is, after all, only the original presbyteral order with two additions, the Apostolic privilege of ordination and the Apostolic power of government. It had always been acknowledged that the bishop might depute to the presbyter the "offering of the gifts"; therefore the presbyter as well as the bishop might claim the title of priest.<sup>1</sup>

We are not, then, contradicting the great authority of Lightfoot if we assert that the plenitude of Apostolic authority is continued in the episcopal Order, but that it is necessarily shared by them with the original Order of the presbyterate.

What, then, do we mean by the Apostolic authority? In other words, what is a bishop?

In the first place he is a priest.<sup>2</sup> His chief function is to be the celebrant of the holy mysteries. What those who like the phraseology of Western Catholicism call Pontifical High Mass is not a highly specialised service only suitable for exceptional occasions: it is the normal liturgical action of Christendom. The bishop as the chief liturgical minister of the flock, surrounded at his throne by representatives of the other Orders, leads his people in the supreme act of Christian worship. This is made abundantly clear in the earliest extant form for the Consecration of a bishop, that "Church Order" of which we have

<sup>1</sup> It cannot be argued that because the presbyter was at one time merely the bishop's delegate, therefore he has now no rights of his own. The whole parochial system depends on the idea of a permanent delegation of authority which cannot be resumed by the bishop at his own will. In technical language a parish priest has "ordinary" and not merely "delegated" jurisdiction. It is only on such an understanding that the small proportion of bishops to presbyters can possibly be justified. If we really wished to have the primitive system back again a very large number of our incumbents would have to be consecrated to the episcopate. In effect, though not of course in theory, this would be very like Presbyterianism.

<sup>2</sup> We cannot here avoid a verbal contradiction of Lightfoot. But perhaps it may be hoped that it is not much more than verbal (see Gore, *The Church and the Ministry*, pp. 70-80).



spoken before, and the author of which is probably St. Hippolytus, in the early part of the third century. As soon as the Consecration is effected the new bishop proceeds at once to celebrate the Eucharist. But the same emphasis is already found in St. Ignatius, where the bishop's Eucharist is the centre of Church unity. And in the days when all the presbyters had the title of bishop it is their special duty as "bishops" to "offer the gifts of the bishop's office."<sup>1</sup> It is for the sake of the weekly Eucharist that the bishops and deacons are to be appointed.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, he is an ordainer. This is the function which from the beginning has been the *differentia* of the bishop's office. His power of offering the holy Sacrifice he has always delegated to presbyters as occasion demanded, his power of ordination never. This is his distinctively Apostolic function. It may be impossible to discover whether this reservation to the bishop of the power of ordaining other ministers rests on the immediate and revealed will of our Lord or no. What does seem certain, unless our whole view of the ministerial character is wrong from the beginning, is that no one can take this power to himself, and that in fact no one has ever been entrusted with it except *pecially* appointed persons. There is no ground in Church history for supposing that the right to minister is given either by a personal conviction of a call or by recognition of such a call by others, or by election on the part of the congregation, or by any form of joint Ordination on the part of those who are already presbyters. Some ministers have the right to ordain, some have not. From the moment when the rule of the single bishop for each place was established there has never been the slightest doubt in the Catholic Church that the final word in this matter of Ordination rested with him. However called, however chosen, the minister, whether presbyter

<sup>1</sup> *Clem. ad Cor.* 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Did.* 15.



or deacon, is sent, endowed, authorised, and empowered at the single, "irreviewable discretion"<sup>1</sup> of the bishop. His prayer and the imposition of his Apostolic hands are conceived to be the act of Christ through the appointed organ of His Body mystical.

Of course, "irreviewable" is not the same as arbitrary. Once a man is ordained he is a minister, and, for good or for evil, a minister he remains. But, as we have seen and shall see again, the consent of the Church ought always to be a vital matter for the bishop in coming to a decision. At this point we ought to notice something which is immemorially entwined with the very act of Ordination itself. From the beginning, according to all our evidence, at the Ordination of a presbyter, the presbyterate as a body join the bishop in the imposition of hands. Some would assert that this is a vestige of original presbyteral Ordination. But if we have been right in coming to the conclusion that it is more probable that there has always been a special Order with sole authority to ordain, it will be better to seek for an explanation by the analogy of the plural Consecration of bishops. As we shall see, the original idea of this was to signify the consent of the episcopate in general. It seems likely that the real significance of the ceremony we are now considering is the welcome of the whole group of the presbyters of the diocese to the new ministers, and their solemn approval of the action of their chief.

Thirdly, he is potentially a consecrator of other bishops. Here there is a distinction to be made. The Consecration of a bishop involves an act of jurisdiction outside the diocese of the bishop who is imparting the episcopal Order. Therefore, although since St. Augustine it has been recognised in the West that as a bare matter of validity any bishop can give

<sup>1</sup> The phrase used by Dr. E. J. Palmer, then Bishop of Bombay, at Lausanne.

episcopal Orders to anyone he chooses, yet in practice the right to do so has been very strictly limited, and an irregularly consecrated bishop, though technically a "bishop" in the sense that he cannot be consecrated again, is a person with no status in the Church and no authority to exercise his ministry. How, then, can a bishop be lawfully made? We are not here dealing with the way in which he is to be chosen. That has varied considerably at different periods of Church history. Normally he should be chosen by the diocese in which he will bear rule with the consent of the other bishops of the neighbourhood; and there is, of course, plenty of precedent for the secular power having a considerable voice in the matter, when that power professes itself to be Christian.<sup>1</sup> But the bishop, like the presbyter, must be sacramentally commissioned. In order that this may be lawfully done two things are necessary: (1) The consecrating bishops must be at least three in number. The object of this is to ensure that the new bishop is genuinely welcomed into the episcopal Order. For while in the earliest times—as, for instance, in the mind of St. Ignatius—the bishop is thought of chiefly in connection with his flock, it very soon comes to be seen, as in the writings of St. Cyprian, that his position as a member of the brotherhood of bishops throughout the world is of equal importance. In theory the Ordination of a presbyter is a domestic matter. True, he is a *Catholic* priest—that is to say, the priesthood in which he shares is the priesthood which is diffused throughout the Church: it is not his private possession. But he is ordained to be, in the first instance, one of the clergy of a particular bishop. The Consecration of a bishop is a very different matter. This concerns the whole Church. For this reason it must always,

<sup>1</sup> The present English system by which the new bishop is practically selected by the predominant politician for the time being admits of no defence (see pp. 110, 111).

except in the most exceptional emergency, be performed, not by an individual bishop, but by a group.<sup>1</sup> It is not only the conferring of a special grace, but the solemn admission of a new member into the episcopal brotherhood. (2) For a similar reason the initiative in this matter of the Consecration of a bishop is reserved to the metropolitan bishop. He will either act himself as consecrator in chief, or authorise some other bishop to do so. This is a safeguard against any mere party of bishops taking the law into their own hands and proceeding to multiply their own faction.<sup>2</sup>

Fourthly, like the Apostles, the bishops are corporately and individually "stewards of the mysteries of God." This does not mean the sacraments, but the once hidden, now revealed, secrets of the Divine counsels. In other words, the bishops are the teachers of the Church. It is their business to preach the saving truths of the Gospel, and their responsibility to watch the development of theology and see that it neither stagnates nor corrupts.

Theoretically, it has always been possible to summon a meeting of bishops which shall represent the whole Church. One of the functions of such a meeting, which is called a General Council, might be to define the doctrine of the Church. But the function of the bishops in council has been limited to making

<sup>1</sup> It is often pointed out that this rule of Consecration by a group of bishops is an assurance against accidental impediments to validity. This is no doubt perfectly true, unless we adopt the modern Roman point of view that the assisting bishops are *mere* assistants, and do not really take part in the Consecration except in the same sense as the assisting presbyters do at the Ordination of a presbyter. At the same time it does not seem that this was the original idea. The sharp distinction between validity and regularity belongs to a more sophisticated point of view than that of the Church of the fourth century, to which the regulation goes back.

<sup>2</sup> The necessity for the confirmation of the election of a bishop by some central authority rests on the same principle. The Councils of Arles and Nicæa both assign this privilege to the Metropolitan; in later times in the churches of the Roman obedience it has been transferred to the Pope.

clear and distinct what has always been implied in the original deposit of doctrine as taught by the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> They do not meet for the discussion of speculative theology, but to bear witness to the tradition they have received from their predecessors and to compare it with that of other sees. Then, if the Church as a whole accepts the decision of the bishops, the council is called not merely General, but Ecumenical.

Only, of course, the matter is never really quite so simple as this. For one thing, it is not always possible to determine at once whether any particular council does represent the mind of the whole Church. Under the Papal system there is no difficulty; for if the Pope confirms the decrees, no further *consensus ecclesiæ* may be demanded. This is a convenient and in some ways a natural development, but obviously it does nothing to meet the difficulties of Anglican Christians, who conceive themselves to be unjustly excluded from the more modern among those councils which claim to be ecumenical. Nor does it meet the views of the Orthodox, who, though summoned to such councils, are debarred by their own principles from attending them. In the present divided state of Christendom it seems impossible to hold any council which can really represent the whole Catholic world. There are seven such councils, the dogmatic decrees of which seem to be binding on the Church as a whole, and it looks as though we should have to wait for a general reunion before their number can be increased.

But there is another complication. It is all very well to say that the business of a council is merely to bear witness to the tradition which its members

<sup>1</sup> From this point of view it is obvious that the witness of a see founded by an Apostle would have primary value from the first. This primary value of an Apostolic see as such would, of course, only last for as long as it seemed to have some special Apostolic tradition to preserve.

have received from their own predecessors. But if this were pressed, it would work out at mere Fundamentalism, and, although the theology of the Ecumenical Councils does no doubt lie beneath the surface of the New Testament, it is certainly not *on* the surface. It was the duty of the "stewards" to test the teachings of the theologians and decide whether they were indeed, as they always claimed to be, simply the explication of the immemorial faith of the Church. The bishops have never claimed either inspiration or oracular power. Their teaching office as bishops is simply to decide whether teaching which has been challenged is really in accordance with the original revelation. In the exercise of this function they have on certain very rare occasions put forth an official statement of the content of certain parts of that revelation so drawn as to exclude teaching which seems to be at variance with it. This has to be remembered when we are tempted to think that the wording of creeds and conciliar decrees is too confident or too detailed. In almost every case the statement was primarily meant to exclude something which seemed definitely misleading and sub-Christian.

But the teaching office of the episcopate is not exercised only or chiefly by the conciliar method. Each bishop is meant to be the teacher of his diocese, and is the person ultimately responsible for preserving the faith in its purity. How great a responsibility this is can only be seen when we remember that the faith cannot be artificially isolated from other departments of mental activity. Philosophy, politics, science and art are all closely related to religion, and while there is no exclusively Christian expression of any one of them, it is sometimes the duty of the Christian teacher to show that things which are being taught in the name of scientific truth or political expediency are not in fact consistent with Christianity. The wreckage of disastrous failure which strews the shore



might well deter anyone from embarking on so perilous a venture. Yet the venture must be made, unless Christianity is to abdicate its claim to be the moral and spiritual guide of mankind. The institution of the episcopate ought at least to prevent it from being made by rash and irresponsible adventurers.

Fifthly, the bishop controls ecclesiastical discipline. In the last resort the bishop's word is peremptory. But this does not mean that he can constitute himself a tyrant whose word shall be law, but rather that it is he who decides whether any given person is or is not a faithful member of the Church. He is not an individual lawgiver, but, when necessary, a judge. As such he can pass a sentence of excommunication or of reconciliation. This power of the bishop seems to be coeval with episcopacy itself, and to be a direct inheritance from the fatherly but coercive power exercised by the Apostles according to the dispensation of our Lord Himself.

It should be observed, however, that in early times the presbyters were the assessors of the bishop even when he exercised judicial and disciplinary powers. As Bingham (a strong assertor of episcopalian as against presbyterian principles) observes: "The bishop . . . did scarce anything in the administration and government of the Church without the advice, consent, and amicable concurrence of his presbyters. . . . At Rome and Carthage, the two great Churches of the West, all things were thus transacted by joint consent . . . whether it was in the Ordinations of the clergy . . . or in the reconciliation of penitents. . . . At Ephesus Noëtus was convened before the presbytery, and then again, upon a relapse, by them expelled from the Church. Which at least must mean that the bishop and his presbyters joined together in this ecclesiastical censure. . . . From all which it appears that it was an ancient privilege of presbyters



to sit and deliberate with bishops in their consistorial and provincial councils.”<sup>1</sup> It would appear also that when the English Convocations sit as courts of justice, the “concurrence” of the Lower Houses is required in order to secure a conviction. This, at least, is the view expressed in his *Synodus Anglicana* by Bishop Gibson, who (writing in reply to Atterbury) is more disposed to belittle than to exaggerate the privileges of the Lower Houses.

The judicial authority of the bishop has passed through many phases in the course of Church history, and has now been to a great extent blended with the purely medicinal ministry to souls which has been exercised by spiritual men from the beginning without any reference to the power of excommunication. A priest who hears confessions in modern times is really carrying out a double ministry. As a pastor of souls he is trying to help his penitents to make their peace with God and amend their lives. But he is also acting as the bishop’s delegate (ultimately, of course, as the delegate of Christ) in deciding whether the penitent is fit to be admitted to the Holy Communion. Authority to act for the bishop in this matter is included in the “ordinary jurisdiction,” which is imparted with institution to the cure of souls. Where cure of souls has not been given it rests with the bishop to delegate or withhold the power of giving absolution.

Sixthly, the bishops have certain rights as constitutional lawgivers. These are exercised in two ways: in councils which consist of bishops only; and in the diocesan synod, which consists of the bishop and his presbyters.

Councils consisting of bishops only usually meet in the form of a provincial synod: but at such synods representative presbyters have usually been invited to be present, to assist the bishops with their advice

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquities*, bk. ii., c. 19.

and often also to express their assent by subscribing the decrees. In the English Church, by long-standing tradition, the presence of representative presbyters in a provincial synod (a "Convocation") is regarded as constitutionally essential, and no resolutions of the Upper House (even in matters of faith, worship, and discipline) can become "synodical acts" (and as such binding on the faithful) until they have received the "concurrence" of the Lower House, which is occasionally refused, in whole or in part. In the famous Convocation of 1689 the refusal of the Lower House to "concur" with the Upper House saved the Church of England from what to most Church-people of that day seemed nothing short of a liturgical and doctrinal disaster.

Provincial synods are competent to pass canons which will bind the consciences of all, whether clerical or lay, who owe them allegiance. Such canons must not ordinarily be contrary to the universal law of the Church, so far as that can be determined, and various questions can be raised as to the extent to which universal custom has the force of law, and as to the dogmatic presuppositions which seem to underlie a canon which at first sight is purely disciplinary.<sup>1</sup> But apart from such reservations, the general principle remains that national or provincial synods may pass canons which will be binding on the clergy and laity of the regions which they represent.

In England there are two provincial synods, but no national synod. In recent times the place of a

<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes said that no local synod can ever enact anything contrary to the general law of the Church. This would be a perfectly sound principle if there were any body or person universally recognised as having legislative authority for the whole Church. Certainly it would go very far to deprive a local decision of spiritual authority if it could be shown that it was in flat contradiction to ecclesiastical law which was at the moment in full working order all over the rest of the Church. But to say that all ecclesiastical law which has ever been enforced throughout Christendom is in the nature of things unalterable until Christendom has been reunited does seem to fly in the face of common sense.

national synod has been effectively supplied by "sittings together" of the two Convocations, the votes of the two bodies being counted separately, and the agreement of all four houses being required for the validity of decrees.

The functions of the diocesan synod are twofold : (a) To give the bishop the opportunity of promulgating any decrees which have been made by the provincial synod ; (b) to enable him to take counsel with his presbyters on any matters connected with the spiritual needs of the diocese. As a result of these discussions the bishop can, if he thinks good, lay down canonical regulations for his diocese.

Some authorities affirm that provided he has taken counsel with the presbyterate he need not be guided by their advice, but can pass canons at his own discretion, and that these are fully binding on all who are under his jurisdiction, always, of course, provided that they do not transgress what is already ordered by a higher authority.

Other authorities hold that the same principle which governs the decrees of English provincial synods applies also to diocesan synods, in which case an English diocesan bishop's regulations for his diocese require the "concurrence" of his presbyters before they can become "synodical acts," and as such canonically binding on the clergy and laity. "Constitutional" episcopacy is usually understood to involve the principle that the bishop should secure the assent and "concurrence" of his clergy for the regulations which he makes for the government of his diocese. Many Presbyterians have been and would be willing to assent to a "moderated" episcopacy of this kind, which is something quite distinct from mere "prelacy" or episcopal autocracy. In this connection it is worthy of note that the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, in its recent assent to the Prayer-Book policy of the episcopal

Bench, added this significant proviso: "But this House respectfully requests his Grace the President and their Lordships of the Upper House to provide that the concurrence of the Convocation shall be obtained to any general regulations issued for the Province, and of the synod of the diocese to local regulations by individual bishops" (July 11, 1929).

In any case, it would seem almost inconceivable that any bishop would in modern times really impose his own arbitrary *fiat* and ignore a contrary vote of his clergy, except in cases where the matter had really been settled in the provincial synod, which has superior authority. The bishop, like a modern constitutional sovereign, may have many powers in theory which, if he were wise, he would never, or hardly ever, dream of putting into practice.

Seventhly, although the bishop is not an individual lawgiver, he is the chief executive officer of the Church, and as such has very extensive powers. The clergy in particular are bound to render him obedience when he claims their observance of the canons of the Church. This obligation is, in fact, confirmed by oath, but as Canon Lacey has somewhere pointed out, they take an oath because it is a duty: it is not a duty because they have taken an oath.

The exact scope of canonical obedience is not very easy to define. It certainly does not mean obedience to any and every command of the bishop with the single exception of those which seem contrary to the law of God. That is to say, it is not like the obedience of a soldier to his officer, or like that of a religious to his superior. The clergy do not cease to be free men by the act of taking Orders. On the other hand, it certainly does include obedience to the canons of the Church when and if the bishop demands obedience to them.

The bishop is also in theory the director of liturgical worship. In practice, however, his control has been

much curtailed by the existence of national or provincial service books, so that the *jus liturgicum* seems to mean little more than the right to authorise or forbid services which are not provided for by the canonical books.

Eighthly, the bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation. There are few customs of the Church of such universal authority as that of completing Baptism by an act which somehow introduces the bishop as the personal and individual representative of the Catholic Church. This is not the place to discuss the exact relation between Baptism and Confirmation. But beyond all dispute, from the very earliest ages of the Church something else has always had to be done to the baptised besides the actual washing with water in the Name of the Holy Trinity. The laying on of hands is consistently regarded in the New Testament as a sacramental complement of Baptism,<sup>1</sup> and as an ordinance of such vast spiritual importance that in Heb. vi. 1, 2 it is actually ranked with the Resurrection and Baptism as one of the "first principles of the doctrine of Christ." Its permanence follows necessarily from such a view of its dignity.

Moreover, this second action has always been thought to involve a special gift of the Holy Ghost. It is entirely misleading to speak as though it were simply, or even primarily, a permission to receive Holy Communion. It is quite true that in the primitive Church it did invariably precede Communion, but it is one thing to say that no one may communicate until he has been confirmed, and quite another to affirm that Confirmation and permission to communicate are the same thing. For, indeed, in the primitive Church Confirmation was far more closely connected with Baptism than with the Holy Eucharist. Baptism and Confirmation are in theory

<sup>1</sup> See Acts viii. 15-17; xix. 6.



one rite, even though they are two sacraments. The very confusion between the three possible anointings which accompanied them shows this very clearly. In the complex rite the whole of which seems at one time to have been known as "Baptism" there are two main divisions, one belonging to the ministry of the presbyters, the other to that of the bishop. The presbyters wash the candidates and anoint them on the breast; the bishop lays his hand upon them and anoints them on the forehead. In the former part of the rite it has always been clear that the washing is the more important part of the outward sign: but in the latter the anointing very soon came to have the chief significance. Thus (whether as cause or effect of this) we find that in the East it is considered sufficient that the chrism used for the final anointing should have been consecrated by a bishop. In the West, however, with a few exceptions, it is always the bishop himself who actually confirms. As a result the practice of infant baptism has not in the East interfered with the original principle that Baptism and Confirmation are conferred in close connection as parts of a single rite. Infants are confirmed as a matter of course immediately after their Baptism. That is to say, the priest who baptises them anoints them on the forehead after Baptism with a chrism specially consecrated for the purpose by the bishop. But in the West, where the actual presence of the bishop is normally insisted on, Baptism has now become totally separated in time from Confirmation. The latter is generally deferred until the child has attained the use of reason.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, the imposition of hands has disappeared altogether in the East. The touch of the bishop is, so to say, mediated by the chrism which he has consecrated. In the Latin rite, with less excuse, the imposition of hands has been reduced to a shadow. The bishop merely spreads his hands over the candidates, though, of course, he does in fact touch them at the anointing.

It is a cause for great satisfaction that the Anglican rites contain the original ceremony of imposition of hands. It only seems a pity



It will be seen that all this is quite unlike the idea that Confirmation is essentially a profession of faith, or an assumption of responsibility, or an admission to Communion. It is rather a sacramental act by which the bishop as the depositary of the full Apostolic authority ratifies and completes the action of the subordinate minister, and confers a gift which from the lower point of view is complete Church membership, but from the higher a new endowment with the Holy Ghost Himself. It has very little in common with the rite known as Confirmation among Lutherans, and practically nothing with the methods of admission to Communion used by other reformed Churches. However valuable these may be, they are not Confirmation, which stands or falls with episcopacy.

Here, then, we seem to have a complete list of the main functions of the great Catholic institution of episcopacy. The existence of the Order of bishops means that there are certain ministers who alone possess the plenitude of the Apostolic grace and authority, while the separate existence of the presbyterate and the diaconate implies that it is possible for them to delegate (but to delegate irrevocably) certain portions of that grace and authority to lower Orders on the clear understanding that other portions are deliberately withheld. In other words, episcopacy implies that the diversity of ministries characteristic of Apostolic days is a permanent feature of the life of the Church. Bishops might be as numerous as they were in North Africa in the third century or as they are in Italy today: or they might be as few as they were in the Anglican Communion in the eighteenth century. It is for the episcopal Order itself to decide on what scale it will reproduce itself.

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that we have not also made good our appeal to primitive custom by retaining or restoring the immemorial ceremony of anointing. This was one of the lost opportunities of the proposed revisions of 1927 and 1928.

It would presumably be possible, however undesirable, to put every parish under the charge of a bishop. All this is a question of expediency. As we have seen, there is plenty of precedent—at least Western precedent—for the view that bishops and presbyters are one Order and not two. This is little more than a matter of phraseology. But what does seem impossible on Catholic principles is to accept the position that there is no difference between the bishop and the presbyter, or that ministers ordained by presbyters have the same authority as those ordained by bishops.

What, then, makes a man a bishop? Is it canonical possession of a certain see, or is it the fact that he was consecrated by others who were bishops before him? There is no doubt about the answer given by the theologians of Western Christendom in medieval and modern times. A man attains to the grace of the episcopate by Consecration, but he has no right or authority to exercise the office of a bishop unless he has a definitely recognised place in the structure of the Church as contemporarily organised. But it would seem that this distinction between the grace of the office and the right to use it was not clearly discerned in the primitive Church, and certainly at the present time it is not recognised by the Orthodox Churches of the East. The Orthodox position has the merit of great simplicity. A man is either a bishop of the Church or he is not. In order to be a bishop he must be consecrated as such by those whom the Church has empowered to consecrate—that is to say, by the Metropolitan and at least two other bishops; if he has a see, he must be in lawful possession of it; and he must be in communion with the Church. A schismatical bishop and a non-consecrated bishop are in the same position: they are not bishops at all. The ministry is the organ of the Church, and it is impossible to receive the grace of the ministry or any other sacramental grace outside

the Church. If the holder of it falls away from the Church after receiving the grace he forfeits it, and his acts are no longer the acts of the Church. This, or something very like it, seems to have been the general view of the primitive Church. It is seen in an extreme form in St. Cyprian's insistence that heretical baptism was invalid and must be repeated. No distinction is made between "validity" and "regularity."

There is a great deal to be said for this view. It is perfectly simple and logical, and is in complete accordance with ordinary civic principles. Political philosophy recognises no such thing as indelible character.<sup>1</sup> If I act contrary to law I act both irregularly and invalidly.<sup>2</sup> A power of attorney is useless unless it is in order. I cannot become Lord Chancellor by stealing the Great Seal. Why, then, do we in the West hold to the principle that a degraded or schismatical bishop is still a bishop and capable of conferring Holy Orders? Again, if we hold this, why do we not say that *all* his episcopal acts are of full authority?

There are two answers: (1) The difference of character between medieval and modern heresy and schism on the one hand, and those of primitive times on the other. (2) St. Augustine's theology of the Church and sacraments. In primitive times heresy meant Gnosticism, which at first was hardly Christian at all. It was necessary to say that only within the Church (*i.e.*, in primitive thought in communion with the lawful bishops) was sacramental grace to be found. Schism was treated on the analogy of heresy. But as time went on this very sharp distinction ceased to correspond with facts. It was difficult to say that an Arian was not a Christian: still more difficult to

<sup>1</sup> Some, no doubt, would make an exception in the case of an anointed King: but that would usually be on religious rather than purely civic grounds.

<sup>2</sup> There are exceptions here in one or two cases of the marriage law. But this also is complicated with religious considerations.

assert it of a Monophysite : and when it came to a Donatist (who was not a heretic at all) it became ridiculous.<sup>1</sup> If, then, a man is a Christian, and even an orthodox Christian, and if all the ordinary conditions for the conferring of sacramental grace are present, it seems impossible to say that the fact that he is not in right relations with the Catholic hierarchy destroys that grace altogether. It may go a long way towards destroying it. St. Augustine apparently thought that it reduced it to a mere potentiality. It was impossible for anyone to get any good out of sacraments received in schism. But they were sacraments. A schismatical bishop returning to unity did not need to be consecrated afresh. An offer was even made to allow *two* bishops to occupy some of the African sees as a temporary arrangement, in order to facilitate reunion between Catholics and Donatists.

But St. Augustine arrived at this conclusion not by the way of recognising the Donatist sect as in itself a part of the Church (so long as it remained in separation), but by making a distinction between the solid Divine fact of grace and mutable ecclesiastical ordinances. Holy Order in itself is a Divine gift. Its transmission, when the right means are taken, is a matter of almost mathematical certainty. But Divine gifts must be lawfully used if they are to do us any good. Therefore there are two things to be considered : on the one hand bare validity, on the other regularity. The irregular can be regularised, but the invalid cannot by human means be validated.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Novatianists of the third century were in the same case as the Donatists in this respect. But it was in fact the Donatist schism which led to the final change in the mind of the Western Church.

<sup>2</sup> This does not contradict what was said on p. 44 about the meaning of validity. Let it be granted that invalid means insecure, and not unreal. But the doubt and insecurity attach to the question *whether the sacrament is real or not*. If we say it is invalid, we say that we cannot be sure whether it is real. If it is unreal, the Church cannot by her fiat *give* it reality. But, of course, God can. That is not in question. "According to your faith be it unto you."

It is clear that this reasoning is apposite to the question of Apostolic succession. We have seen already that there are two sets of facts which may need consideration as to any bishop. (1) Is he in the true succession of office? Has he been appointed lawfully? Was the see really vacant? Does the Church recognise him as Bishop of X.? But we may also have to ask: (2) Is he in the true succession of grace? Who consecrated him? Had the consecrator ever received the power to consecrate a bishop? The former is a question of regularity, the latter of validity. The doctrine underlying the distinction in this case is that the grace of the ministry is a gift of God to the Apostles, which needs to be *transmitted* before we can be sure of its existence. It is not a mere specialisation of something possessed by the Church as a whole, but something imposed upon the Church by Christ Himself. To ask whether the Church came before the ministry or the ministry before the Church is as fatuous a question as the famous dilemma about the hen and the egg, but it is capable of a far more satisfactory answer. They were both created by our Lord and simultaneously vivified by the Holy Ghost. The exact distinction between the immutable Divine side and the mutable human side in the conferring of Holy Orders is one of which it is not always quite easy to be sure. But broadly, we may say that the Church cannot dispense with (1) an ordaining or consecrating minister who has himself received power to bestow the gift of Holy Orders; (2) the Apostolic gesture of the imposition of hands, which is evidence that the ordainer or consecrator intends to transmit that which he received at his own Ordination or Consecration; (3) some words, whether of prayer, or of authority, or of direct statement, which make it clear that it is intended to confer some particular Order. On the other hand the bishop, however validly consecrated,



cannot administer his diocese lawfully if his own position is irregular. But regularity is a matter of ecclesiastical order, and therefore liable to change; and, in fact, the accepted conditions of regularity have varied enormously at different periods. All that we can say about this is that he must have been *appointed* and *accepted* in some recognised way. Thus by the validity of his Consecration he receives the Order or grace-gift of the episcopate, but by the regularity of his appointment he receives jurisdiction to rule his diocese.

It is fairly easy to distinguish in most cases between those acts which a bishop performs in virtue of his jurisdiction and those which belong to the grace of Consecration. The administration of the diocese obviously belongs to the former division even though we may not now go so far as to allow a bishop to do this before he has been consecrated, as often happened in the Middle Ages. Ordination and Confirmation equally obviously belong to the latter.<sup>1</sup> The puzzle only arises with regard to disciplinary questions. The power of binding and loosing belongs primarily to the juridical side of the line, yet it is clear that the mystical assurance of a forgiveness which is ratified in heaven goes beyond the more ecclesiastical sphere and depends on the special aptitude of an Apostolic person to represent our Lord. Therefore it seems clear that the present restriction of the giving of absolution to priests is a right and true development. But in the third century, when absolution was thought of chiefly as a judicial sentence of the bishop, it seems to have occasioned no surprise when a deacon was given authority to release from excommunication in the bishop's name. None the less it is important to remember that a priest in giving

<sup>1</sup> Functions belonging to the juridical side of the bishop's authority may be delegated to those who are not bishops, but not those derived from the grace of Consecration. The fact that Eastern presbyters regularly, and Western ones occasionally, administer Confirmation



absolution is normally exercising jurisdiction as well as order.<sup>1</sup>

It may be worth while to set out the two sets of ideas in tabular form :

| <i>Regularity</i>                                                    | APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION. | <i>validity</i>                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| A.                                                                   |                       | B.                                        |
| Succession of office.                                                |                       | Succession of grace.                      |
| Secures continuity of teaching.                                      |                       | Secures continuity of the grace of Order. |
| Secured by—                                                          |                       | Secured by episcopal Consecration.        |
| 1. Election in due form, whether by clergy or people, or both.       |                       |                                           |
| 2. Acceptance by the episcopate, as indicated—                       |                       |                                           |
| (a) By the Metropolitan or his delegate acting as chief consecrator. |                       |                                           |
| (b) By the co-operation of several bishops at the Consecration.      |                       |                                           |
| (c) By confirmation of election by Metropolitan or Pope.             |                       |                                           |
| Giving jurisdiction.                                                 |                       | Giving the episcopal Order.               |
| Resulting in regularity.                                             |                       | Resulting in validity.                    |

Now, when we set this developed Western view of the matter against the more primitive conceptions

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is not really an exception; for in any case the chrism is consecrated by a bishop. In the Church of England juridical functions are even delegated to laymen. This is contrary to the customs of the primitive Church. Moreover, the trial of a priest for heresy by a lay chancellor seems opposed to the judicial principle that a man has a right to be tried by his peers, while the determination by a layman of the conditions of the administration of the sacraments has caused grave scandals again and again.

<sup>1</sup> The whole question is immensely complicated by the fact that through most of the history of the Church confessions have been regularly made to monks who were not priests with a view to obtaining the Divine pardon, though not, of course, the formal absolution of the Church. It is this system mingled with the ancient episcopal discipline which has resulted in the present arrangement, according to which presbyters receive authority to give absolution *in foro conscientiae*. See O. D. Watkins, *The History of Penance*, and an essay on "Confession to Laymen" in W. K. Lowther Clarke's *New Testament Problems*, pp. 185 ff.

which have been retained in the East it would seem as though the latter would guard us against some obvious dangers. There is the danger of a mechanical and magical idea of Holy Order. The Western view suggests that when we know how to do it we can compel God to make a man a bishop. Or, again, it has the danger of letting loose upon the Church a number of rebellious bishops, who in turn may consecrate others freely and bring the whole clerical estate into deserved contempt. Such *episcopi vagantes* are not unknown today: and although they have not exactly flooded the world with irregular bishops, they have not been idle in this respect, and there seems nothing to prevent them from continuing the process. As regards the former danger, we can only say that it is inherent in the sacramental conception. We do not really guard ourselves against it by saying that irregular bishops are not bishops at all. It still remains true, unless the whole sacramental view of Holy Orders is a false one, that God has put Himself in our power. Only we must remember that the "form" of every sacrament is a prayer, explicit or implicit. That is in itself a recognition of the fact that the ultimate power is God's and not our own. Moreover, it was God who appointed the manner of the sacraments. God, like Nature, "is only conquered by obedience." Nor is the latter danger quite so serious as it seems. For, after all, a *confessedly* irregular sacrament is of no use to anyone. So far as it is administered in good faith, no one with a high conception of the Divine sympathy could possibly imagine that it was not beneficial: but if it is known and acknowledged to be irregular, it is usually held that it is mortal sin either to administer or receive it. This, indeed, is no more than common sense. It can be nothing but a grievous wrong against God to use His sacraments knowingly in a way which is not according to His will. Bare validity is, therefore,

after all, no more than bare potentiality, which is something so tenuous as to be almost non-existent.

On the other hand, the Augustinian view has certain very great advantages. It implies, to begin with, that the external conditions of receiving a true sacrament are known, definite, and objective. It is always possible to find out whether there really is a sacrament being administered or not. God's side—the objective side—is certain. All that we have to concern ourselves about is the question whether we ourselves have the proper dispositions for profitable reception. We must, of course, make a judgment as to where, to the best of our belief, we are to find the true Church; but having done that, we need not worry any further as to the result of our having possibly made a mistake. So long as we are in good faith and have a true ministry we have the sacraments and we have the benefits of them.<sup>1</sup> Further, we must say that God does not always act as we should have expected Him to do. The fact that sacraments can be administered even by an unworthy minister (whether his unworthiness takes the form of unconscious schism or of conscious sin) is certainly not more surprising than the facts of parenthood. Indeed, in our present question as to the validity of Consecrations and Ordinations, the analogy is very close indeed.

<sup>1</sup> Roman Catholics would, of course, refuse to allow Anglicans to shelter under such a plea, on the ground that the Pope has declared against the truth of the Anglican ministry. To this we can only answer that we are quite unconvinced by the arguments of Leo XIII., and that, with all respect to the Holy See, we do not believe that invincible ignorance is necessarily on the Anglican side in this dispute.

Moreover, Eastern Christendom and the ancient Church of Holland have declared themselves against Rome in this matter; and those portions of the Orthodox Church which are free to act have decreed that Anglican Orders have the same validity as Roman.

*old Catholics*

*See of Utrecht*

## CHAPTER VI

### SOME OTHER THEORIES OF THE MINISTRY

RELIGIOUS controversy is notorious for the production of an irreligious state of mind, and nothing is more destructive of charity on both sides than an attack on other people's convictions. Perhaps, therefore, it is best to preface this chapter by pointing out that the subject of the ensuing one is "Lessons for Anglicans." Indeed, there are only two ways of reconciling the present divisions of Christendom with a belief in Divine Providence. One is to say that God is teaching us that theories about the ministry are unimportant, inasmuch as it is clear that the fruits of the Spirit are produced by means of ministries which rest on theories which are mutually contradictory. The other is boldly to acknowledge that when something goes wrong with the Catholic Church God deliberately allows the situation to be balanced by the evil of separation. The separated community is wrong in so far as it is separated: but none the less it has its part to play in witnessing to certain principles which the Catholic Church is in danger of forgetting. This seems to be equally true when the separation is *within* the Catholic Church and when it is *from* the Catholic Church. The separation between East and West is in itself a tragedy unspeakable: yet it seems that it was necessary as the only remedy against what we might call over-Papalisation. The separation between Rome and Canterbury is equally tragic: yet it is possible to believe that complete submission to all that Rome has stood for might have been an even greater evil. Whether the separation could have been averted is another matter. With

more sincere piety on both sides perhaps it could : but it is permissible to think that a complete victory for either side would have been an even worse disaster than that which has actually taken place. The same holds good with those schisms which seem to have involved an actual breach with Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> Considered as schisms they are in the wrong, but the very fact that they do actually continue and bear good fruit may indicate that they stand for something which God will not allow to be forgotten. Although, then, it is our duty to try to point out what is lacking in theories which seem to fall short of something which God has shown to us, it must not be thought that we suppose that we have everything to teach and nothing to learn. The fact that we in the Anglican Communion are in much the same relation to the Roman

<sup>1</sup> To speak in this way does not necessarily imply that "non-Catholics" are not in any sense members of the Catholic Church. The primitive view was that schism separates from the Church, and no doubt St. Cyprian represents an older practice than that of St. Stephen of Rome in insisting that schismatics returning to the unity of the Church must be baptised. But even after the Roman view had won the day the theory remained that although Baptism might have been validly administered and was therefore not to be repeated, the schismatic as such is outside the Catholic Church. Even when St. Augustine's view of the validity of Holy Orders received in schism at last became dominant, it did not by any means carry with it the inference that anyone separated from the lawful hierarchy can still be considered a member of the Church. (See Fr. Puller and Dr. Stone's pamphlet, *Who are Members of the Church?*) But modern teachers usually hesitate to speak with the confidence of an earlier age. Even in the Roman Church some teach that all the baptised are members of the Church, and claim the support of the Canon Law. "By Baptism a man is constituted a person in the Church of Christ, with all the rights and duties of Christians, unless, in so far as concerns rights, there be an obstacle hindering the bond of ecclesiastical communion, or a censure imposed by the Church" (Code of Canon Law, can. 87, quoted by Fr. Geddes, in *The Church*, ed. C. Lattey, S.J., p. 204, and discussed by him on pp. 205, 206). But this is a very different matter from saying that a communion which has organised itself in opposition to the Catholic Church is none the less a constituent part of the Church. The claim of the Church of England is, of course, that it did not so organise itself. It is in historical continuity with the pre-Reformation Church, and having likewise maintained the Apostolic ministry, it has full and complete Catholic rights in the matter of jurisdiction.



Catholic Church as the non-episcopal communions are to ourselves ought to teach us sympathy. The Roman Catholic Church officially denies Anglican Orders and treats us as schismatics from the Church, yet no one would hold that it was the duty of an Anglican to join the Roman Church unless he were convinced either that Anglican Orders were invalid, or that it was necessary to be in communion with the Pope. Even if he were so convinced, he still could not join the Roman Church if to do so implied his accepting theological doctrines in which he did not believe. In much the same way no non-episcopalian could be expected to join the Anglican Communion unless he came to think either that episcopacy was necessary to valid Orders, or that the setting up of a rival ecclesiastical organisation was normally unjustifiable. Even if he did come to either of these conclusions he could not come over if there were anything in our doctrines which seemed to him to be definitely untrue. In this last case he could only take refuge in the thought that his communion seemed to stand in the Divine Providence for some principle which had to be kept in being, and that he must leave to the Divine Omniscience the reconciliation of duties which seemed irreconcilable.

The two cases are not exactly parallel, for the man who could neither believe in Anglican Orders nor in some specific doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church would presumably have to refrain from the sacraments altogether until he could come to a different mind. The non-episcopalian, on the other hand, if he held that view of the sacraments which is current among most non-episcopalians, would probably not feel that their validity depended on their being administered by an authorised minister. Apart from this, there is a real similarity in the two relationships. We in the Anglican Communion cannot but be dis-

tressed to be cut off by the highest individual authority in Christendom and to have our Orders denied by him. Under normal circumstances we feel that such a situation would rightly compromise us in the eyes of the Christian world. Yet, on the other hand, the general rightfulness of the position we have taken seems to us so clear that "we can no other." We seriously believe that we have received less than justice at the hands of the Papacy, and we can only conclude that there are certain spiritual and theological principles which God means the Anglican Communion to maintain until such time as they can once more find their rightful place in the mind of a united Church. If we are asked what these are, perhaps we can only answer that there seem to us to be certain elements of false history, obscurantism, over-definition, and spiritual tyranny in the Papal Church which must be protested against, even though it cost us a portion of our birthright.

We proceed, then, to glance at certain other theories of the ministry which seem to us defective. The object of the present chapter is to draw attention to these defects, reserving to the next one the more pleasant task of seeing what we may learn from the practice, if not from the theory, of those from whom we are at present separated.

### *A. The Presbyterian Theory.*

Calvin and his disciple John Knox both believed that the Church had become totally corrupt, and in particular that the ministry had altogether ceased to have any claim to be a ministry of Christ. The sacraments had been corrupted into mere superstitious ceremonies by the fact that they were separated from the preaching of the Word. In particular, the whole system of sacerdotal episcopacy was wrong, having departed from the original type as set forth

in Holy Scripture. The Calvinistic ministry laid no claim to a succession from the Apostles. On the contrary, Calvin believed himself to have been providentially raised up to initiate a new ministry, which should itself, by imposition of hands, be transmitted to subsequent generations. He himself never proceeded further than the subdiaconate. The type of ministry which he believed himself to have recovered from the New Testament is that with which we are familiar in Scotland at the present day. Basing his theory on 1 Tim. v. 17, he distinguished two classes of "elder," the preaching elder and the ruling elder. The preaching elder is the minister strictly so called, to whom appertain those spiritual functions for which a specialised spiritual status is required—namely, the preaching of the Word—and as a corollary thereto the ministration of the sacraments. The "ruling elder," also ordained to his office, though not exactly a minister, has entirely equal authority with the minister in all that appertains to spiritual jurisdiction and discipline. The ranks of the office-bearers of the Church are completed by the deacons, who are concerned purely with the temporal and financial side of Church organisation.

This was the system of Church government which was set up by John Knox in Scotland in 1560, and which, with two episcopal interludes, has prevailed there ever since. At its inception the theory behind it was that it was a new ministry taking the place of the old apostate one. Knox was, in fact, an ordained priest, and so were many of his associates, but it is difficult to give much weight to any claims to a presbyteral succession which rely on that fact, when we remember that under Knox's influence the Apostolic ordinance of the imposition of hands was given up, and not revived for twenty years. The abolition of the outward sign, coupled with the constantly preached doctrine that the old priesthood were "no

ministers of Jesus Christ," does seem fatal to any theory of presbyteral succession through Knox and his companions. The token of transmission disappears along with the theory of transmission. The Presbyterian ministry comes into being professedly as a new thing. Thus Bishop Adam Bothwell, of Orkney, himself an associate of Knox, spoke in a sermon at St. Giles's of "setting up the new religion." Imposition of hands was restored to some extent under Melville's régime—*i.e.*, from 1581—but there is no certain evidence whether it was in universal use. If, therefore, we hold that imposition of hands is necessary, and *a fortiori* that the disuse of it, when coupled with a declaration that a new ministry is being set up, destroys any possibility of a valid succession, it follows that the claim of Presbyterians to have a presbyteral succession became progressively fainter as the years went on. But the claim to a "succession" was already being made in 1579 by Thomas Smieton of Glasgow, though in very obscure terms. "We do not reject," he says, "the ordinary succession, which we acknowledge the same as you do; but we think it absurd, when the question at issue is, What is true doctrine? to take refuge in a list of persons."

An undoubted succession was reintroduced into Scotland by means of the episcopate in 1610, and from that time onwards we begin to have evidence of more confident claims to "succession." Thus Cromwell is said to have "thanked God that he did not speak for a ministry deriving itself from the Papacy and pretending to what is so much insisted on—succession."<sup>1</sup> But it must be remembered that the Scottish bishops of 1610 did not give episcopal Orders to those who were already ministering in Scotland, although it was apparently intended that they should do so; and the

<sup>1</sup> Moffat, *The Presbyterian Churches*, p. 30. So also the *Jus Divinum Evangelicæ Ministerii* of 1646 claims the Apostolic succession. But the *Scots Confession* denies that "lineal descent" is a mark of the true Church.

twenty-eight years during which the "first Scottish episcopacy" lasted was not long enough to make presbyters in the episcopalian sense of all the Scottish ministry. Therefore, when the break came in 1638 it seems that the ministry must have been partly, but not wholly, brought within the succession.

From the Presbyterian standpoint this is a very serious matter. When we are dealing with bishops as ordainers it is quite justifiable to say that a doubt as to the episcopal character of one or more of those who took part in an Ordination or Consecration may be ignored, because any one true bishop is sufficient to secure validity. But we cannot use this plea in regard to Presbyterian Ordinations. The Presbyterian theory, if it claims succession at all, must do so through groups of presbyters lawfully associated as the ordaining body. The only Presbyterian theory which has the least plausibility is that which maintains that in the primitive Church Ordination was conferred through the action of the whole body of the presbyters of a local Church. The idea that one presbyter may give Holy Orders is Wesleyanism. Therefore even on the theory that Orders may be validly conferred through presbyters we are plunged into complete uncertainty unless it is clear that those who claim to confer them are actually a group of presbyters. If some of them are and some are not, it seems quite impossible to consider it as a case of Ordination by the ordained at all.

The "second Scottish episcopate" of 1661 cannot be thought to have secured the succession, for at the re-establishment of Presbyterianism in 1691 only one of the ordaining ministers derived his Orders from that source.

Thus, so far as the Scottish Presbyterian ministry is concerned, it will be seen that there is grave doubt as to how far it can rightly claim even a presbyteral succession from the Apostles.



But the objection of the validity of Presbyterian Orders does not rest on what some would think merely technical grounds such as these. While we may have the very greatest respect for the principle of "Ordination by the ordained," which is upheld by the Scottish Church Society and has strong support throughout Presbyterian Scotland, we cannot fail to raise the question whether there is sufficient evidence for the theory that the ordained as such have the right to perpetuate the ministry of the Church. The Presbyterian theory is that when a man has been inwardly called by God, and outwardly by a particular congregation, he may then be ordained by the neighbouring group of presbyters, and in this way receives the character of a "preaching elder," or minister. But the rightfulness of this rests on two assumptions. First, on the view that in the Apostolic or sub-Apostolic Church Ordination was in some places at least thus given by a group of presbyters. It is impossible to prove the negative. But our direct Scriptural evidence goes to show that Ordination was given by an Apostle or an Apostolic delegate, though with the accompaniment of the imposition of the hands of the presbyterate. There is absolutely nothing in the New Testament to suggest a co-optive Ordination. St. Clement's letter to Corinth can no doubt be interpreted to refer to something of this kind, but as we have seen, there are strong reasons for thinking that here also there was a quasi-Apostolic authority in the background in whom the ordaining power resided. The idea that in Rome and at Philippi Ordinations were conferred by groups of presbyters and not by a single bishop are mere conjectures. All this is insufficient to give us confidence in the possibility of Holy Orders being conferred without a bishop. The second assumption which is necessary before we can feel confident about Presbyterian Orders is that this right of ordaining, if it did ever exist, is necessarily

inherent in the presbyteral office. In other words, we must believe that it belongs to it by Divine appointment, and that in withholding it the Church was really acting *ultra vires*. For there can be no doubt at all that from the middle of the second century at least the intention of the Church in ordaining presbyters has been to withhold from them the right of ordaining others. Unless the Church is constitutionally incapable of withholding from the presbyterate the right of ordaining others, she quite certainly did so. There is no more undoubted principle throughout Church history from 150 onwards than that Ordination belongs to the bishop only. Thus, so far from it belonging to the presbyters by Divine right, the usual opinion in the Church has been that it belongs by Divine right to the bishop. Even if this cannot be proved—if, that is to say, one may concede that it is possible that groups of presbyters did ordain in some places for a very short period—that is a very different matter from saying that this hypothetical practice represents a presbyteral right which cannot be taken away. Certainly neither John Knox and his companions, nor the presbyters of 1610-1638, were ordained with any idea that they would claim a right of passing on the succession. While, then, we may certainly allow that the Presbyterian theory of the ministry gives to those in Presbyterian Orders an authority which is in principle *like* that of the Catholic Church, it seems impossible for us to refrain from raising questions which bring the position and rights of that ministry into very serious doubt.

It is often urged that the Church of England has already twice committed herself to the validity of Presbyterian Orders in the seventeenth century, even though she refused to enter into communion with the Presbyterianised Church of Scotland until episcopacy had been reintroduced. It is quite true that

in 1610 Spottiswood and his companions were consecrated bishops without having first been ordained deacons and priests, and that neither in 1610 nor in 1661 did the newly consecrated Scottish bishops insist on reordaining the Presbyterian ministers. As to the former point, there is a conflict of evidence as to the intention with which Bancroft consecrated the new bishops. It is said that he regarded them as being already presbyters : it is also said that he alleged the well-known early precedents for the theory that a layman can be consecrated to the episcopate without having passed through the lower Orders. Whatever Bancroft's intention may have been, we have unimpeachable authority for holding that this theory is a true one. The latter point is more serious. There is evidence that the new Scottish bishops intended to decline to admit ministers until they had been episcopally ordained,<sup>1</sup> but if this was their intention they certainly failed to carry it out. It is therefore true that the Church of England was twice in her history in communion with a Church which contained many ministers who had not been ordained by bishops. But unless we claim infallibility for the Church of England, we cannot be held bound by all the precedents which she may have set.

### *B. The Wesleyan Theory.*

It is most convenient to glance at John Wesley's own doctrine of the ministry before proceeding to consider the far less definite theories of his successors in the various Methodist bodies now looking forward to reunion with each other. To Wesley the equation presbyter—bishop meant that every presbyter had in strict right the full power of Ordination possessed by the Catholic bishop. There is far less to be said for this view than for that of Presbyterianism. For

<sup>1</sup> Stephens, *History of the Church of Scotland*, i. 462.

the Presbyterians do not claim that the individual presbyter can ordain. Their theory is rather that the bishop has usurped rights which ought to belong to the local presbyteral group. But Wesley professed to ordain on the ground that as a presbyter he had the same power as a bishop. It must not be supposed that he had no scruples about exercising this power. He fully recognised that it was a breach of Church Order, and only to be justified by necessity. In fact, his Ordinations were not intended to give any right to administer the sacraments in this country. But in view of the difficulty of obtaining priests for Scotland and America he thought himself justified in giving, as he supposed, Holy Orders to those who were prepared to go out of England and were unable to obtain otherwise a title to administer the sacraments. But Wesley transgressed his own principles by laying hands upon a priest named Thomas Coke in order to confer on him a quasi-episcopal authority. On crossing the Atlantic Coke promptly styled himself bishop, and thus inaugurated the important body known in that continent as Episcopal Methodists.

It must be said that *prima facie* John Wesley's theory of Ordination seems preposterous. A continuous group of presbyters with power to add to their own number is a reasonable enough arrangement. The only question is whether that is the arrangement which was made either by our Lord or His Apostles or by subsequent lawful Church authority. But a group, any one of whom is empowered to add to their number, is a plan which would seem to be entirely unworkable.

Wesley's followers in this country entirely dropped any idea of a successive ministry, and for a time abandoned the laying on of hands. The modern Methodist Churches conceive of Ordination as the recognition by the Church of a call from God. The

actual imposition of hands which is now generally practised is not considered to be more than a purely ceremonial accompaniment of prayer.

The Methodist minister is the present-day representative of those evangelists who in Wesley's own day were always known as travelling preachers. Wesley himself always bitterly resented the idea that they had the right to administer the Holy Communion or to claim the full ministerial position. After his death, however, the travelling preacher came to be a minister without any further form of Ordination. Ultimately, therefore, we must say that the Methodist ministry can only justify itself as a prophetic ministry. Each individual minister is separately raised up, and his authority depends upon the Divine call. Of that he must himself be the judge in the last resort, although it is no doubt an additional support to know that men of spiritual discernment agreed with his own conviction. It is ungracious to criticise a man's interior convictions, but from the outside it seems that a personal conviction of this kind, however much fortified by the good opinion of others, must be a poor substitute for the memory of a day when the accredited representative of Christ (if such he be) laid hands upon us and gave us our ministry. Of course, this does not apply to one who knows himself to be indeed the prophet of the Highest: but does God raise up thousands of prophets in a single generation?

### *C. The Lutheran Theory.*

Nothing could be more unlike than the respective ideas of Calvin and Luther on the subject of the ministry. To Calvin, the rigid and clear-thinking doctrinaire, the Presbyterian polity and the discipline resulting therefrom was the essence of Church life. To Luther, the emotional mystic, the whole matter



of the form of the ministry was a matter of complete indifference. It was the Gospel that mattered, and the Gospel meant the doctrine of justification by faith only. If the bishops would only cease to persecute those who held that doctrine and would give up treating it as a bar to Ordination, he was as ready to continue with the episcopal system as any other. This accounts for the curious fact that some Lutherans are episcopal in their organisation and others not. In Sweden the actual episcopal succession has apparently been maintained. In Denmark and Norway a new episcopate without succession from the original one has been set up. In the Evangelical Church of Germany the episcopal title is unknown. But Lutherans one and all insist that neither the form nor the succession of the ministry are of fundamental importance. All distinctions within it are of purely human appointment. They can be altered without scruple by the civil Government, and in monarchically governed countries the Crown is *summus episcopus*.

In all this we cannot but feel that there is a real departure from Apostolic Christianity, however much excuse for it the circumstances of the sixteenth century may have offered. The theory that the Orders of the ministry are of merely ecclesiastical authority seems sharply opposed to St. Paul's statement that it is God who has set the various ministries of the Church each in its appointed place, while the surrender of discipline into the hands of the State seems to make the clergy into civil servants and to be utterly fatal to the authoritative and prophetic side of their office.

#### *D. The Congregationalist Theory.*

The historical basis of Congregationalism is the view that every congregation of Christians is in the last resort independent of every other. This is sometimes stated in such a way as to suggest the purest

individualism. When it is so stated the idea of the Church is simply that of a club, the members of which find it desirable to associate together for religious purposes. But the more modern Congregationalist generally has some idea of the necessity of a Church. By "Church" he may mean only a particular congregation, or he may adopt the highly philosophical view of Dr. Garvie that the local congregation is a microcosm of the universal Church. In either case he claims that the local congregation is completely autonomous, except in so far as it willingly affiliates itself to the Congregational Union.

Thus, according to the stricter view the minister is the servant of one congregation, and his recognition and appointment extend no further than the limits of that congregation. In strict logic, he ought to be ordained afresh if he is transferred to another sphere of work. But the older Congregationalists, who were inclined to take this view, thought so little of Ordination that the matter was probably never fully debated. The newer type of theologian is much more inclined to believe that Ordination does make a difference, and sets a man apart for his lifetime as a minister of the universal Church.

It will be seen that modern Congregationalism approximates to modern Methodism in its theory of the ministry. Ministry is conferred by God direct, and Ordination is (1) the solemn attestation on the part of the Church of the reality of the Divine gift, and at the same time (2) an appointment to an ecclesiastical office which it would be unseemly for a man to claim for himself. Ordination is not, therefore, strictly speaking, a necessity, and there is nothing which a minister does which a layman could not do in an emergency. There is no difference of status, except for the fact that the minister is, so to say, a professional. The only differences in regard to the ministry between Congregationalism and Methodism

in their modern forms seem to be that Methodists employ the imposition of hands at an Ordination and Congregationalists usually do not,<sup>1</sup> and that *Wesleyan* Methodists confine the administration of the Lord's Supper to ordained ministers. The fact that a majority of them are willing to unite with the other English Methodists suggests, however, that this is not with them a matter of ultimate principle.<sup>2</sup>

Baptist principles on the matter of the ministry seem to be identical with those of the Congregationalists.

### *E. Dr. Headlam's View of Catholic Doctrine.*

The Bishop of Gloucester does not, of course, believe himself to be propounding anything inconsistent with fundamental Catholic doctrine. He merely desires to carry a step further the evolution which was begun by the Roman Church under Pope St. Stephen, and was further developed by St. Augustine, but not, according to the Bishop, carried to its full logical conclusion. Dr. Headlam would maintain that we must take our choice between two doctrines, and that there is no half-way house. There is the primitive doctrine, still held by the Eastern Orthodox, that the sacraments are acts of the Church, and only operate within the limits of a strictly defined corporation. On the other hand, there is the logical development of the Augustinian view that sacraments are acts of our Lord, and may therefore operate validly (though irregularly) outside the Church. St. Augustine limited this operation to cases where there was

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Garvie, *What the Churches Stand For*, p. 56. He adds, however, that "there would not now be general opposition to the practice."

<sup>2</sup> In the Constitution of the reunited Methodist body administration by laymen is allowed as an exception, guarded by strict conditions, in cases where the services of an ordained minister cannot be secured. That is, the principle which governs lay Baptism is extended to Holy Communion.

the proper minister and the proper administration. Dr. Headlam desires to remove the former, though not the latter, of these limitations to the validity of sacraments. Thus he affirms that Ordination is valid by whomsoever conferred, provided only that it is given by means of the imposition of hands with prayer. We have no right to insist on anything which is not of obviously Divine appointment. Baptism falls within this category; therefore we cannot allow that anyone is a member of the Church unless he has been baptised. The imposition of hands he is also prepared to treat as of Divine appointment (the grounds for this are not quite clear); therefore no ministry is valid which has not been conferred with this particular ceremony. But there are no grounds for supposing that our Lord limited the power of ordaining ministers to any special class: therefore any group of Christians may ordain anyone to be a minister, and the action is valid. The man is a minister from that moment onward. "As a step and as part of the process of reunion we must recognise the validity of all Orders conferred by the laying on of hands with the intention of fulfilling the command of our Lord and the teaching of His Apostles, and that also all other sacraments thus performed are valid."<sup>1</sup> "Any religious body, being, as it is, a part of Christ's Church, which has done what He commanded with full intent of carrying out His will, must be considered to have received all that He promised in His sacraments."<sup>2</sup>

But, of course, the Bishop does not consider such Ordinations to be satisfactory. The Catholic rule of Ordination by bishops has behind it the full authority of the Church, and for anyone not in episcopal Orders to presume to ordain is an irregular action, and therefore unjustifiable.

This is an entirely different theory from any of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Doctrine of the Church and Reunion*, p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 312.

others which we have considered. Validity does not depend on the authority of the bishop's office, as in the usual Catholic teaching. But neither does it depend on the fact of the ordainer holding any ministerial position, as with the Presbyterian theory: nor on the reality of the call of God, recognised by the people of God, as is generally taught by Methodists and Congregationalists. In the matter of validity perhaps Dr. Headlam's theory might seem identical with that of the Lutherans; but the idea that non-episcopal ministries are irregular would be vehemently contested by them, as it would by all religious bodies which have abandoned the episcopate. It is quite true that some of them only did so under pressure of what seemed to be necessity, but they have all long since learned to justify their action. Nor, again, does it correspond with the theory of the primitive Church, nor with that of St. Augustine. It is in every sense a novelty. That does not prove it to be untrue. We have all, more or less, abandoned the primitive theory that schism destroys all sacraments. (The Orthodox, no doubt, profess to have retained it, but they have taken the sting out of it by their doctrine of "economy."<sup>1</sup>) We must, therefore, be prepared to consider any theory which professes to be a development of Catholic doctrine. The Bishop's theory does profess to be this. It is a *sacramental* theory, which recognises the ministry as a definite spiritual status, ordained by God in Christ, and conferred by means of an appointed sign. It has very little in common with Protestant theories of "recognition."

The points at which it seems to part company with the Catholic tradition are (1) its removal of all boundaries of "the Church" except faith and Baptism, and (2) its abandonment of the idea that the right minister is essential to the validity of a sacrament.

<sup>1</sup> The doctrine, that is, that the Church may give validity to sacraments administered outside her own boundaries.

As to (1) we have seen that the trend of Western Catholic thought has been in the same direction: yet we surely cannot fail to see that it is one thing to say that a baptised person is in a sense a member of the Church, but quite another to say the official action of any group of baptised people is *ipso facto* an official action of the Church. This is not far removed from the newer Congregationalist position that any group of Christians *is* the Church: for nothing less than this will enable us to argue with security that its sacramental acts are necessarily ratified in heaven.

In regard to (2) the position seems to imply that no authority is required to secure the validity of an Ordination. A right intention and what a scholastic would call right matter and right form are requisite, but not any special minister. But *prima facie* this seems destructive of the whole authoritarian conception of the ministry. No doubt, if the authority is directly from God and merely recognised by the congregation that is the end of the matter. We can only bow our heads and listen to God's word by His messenger. But that is by no means the Bishop's attitude. Ordination is a sacramental act imparting authority. But, we cannot help asking, what authority is it? Ordination by the laying on of hands is a symbol eloquent of the bestowal of a gift. The fact that it is accompanied by prayer shows no doubt that the gift is ultimately from God, and not from the ordainer. But the question of authority to ordain is surely vital to the whole conception of the ministry. Is its mission a continuation of the original impulse of our Lord Himself when He differentiated between the Apostles and the rest? Or is it something which starts afresh at every Ordination? Is the significance of the imposition of hands that the less is blessed by the greater? Or is it merely an act by which a certain person is indi-



cated to God as the recipient of a blessing which is to be prayed down upon him? It may, of course, be said that in fact the person who ordains is always a minister. But that, of course, only brings us to the question of how he was made a minister, and we are once more faced with the question of validity of Orders and the transmission of Apostolic authority.

The Bishop, as is well known, contests the whole idea of ministerial transmission, maintaining that it is not a part of the Catholic tradition. Indeed, he strongly hints that it is an Anglican invention.<sup>1</sup> It may well be true that the thought of a golden chain through the ages, binding the present Apostolic ministry to the Apostles and so to Christ, is not a thought which occurred to early or even medieval writers exactly in this form. But the doctrine that the validity of Orders depends on the episcopate does logically involve the idea of transmission. If no one but a bishop can consecrate a bishop, there must always have been bishops, or persons with equivalent authority. The idea of a chain of succession is merely a vivid way of describing this. It may possibly over-emphasise the idea of physical contact. It is difficult to be vivid without bringing into prominence that which naturally strikes the imagination, and the idea of the sacred flame of the Spirit being handed on from bishop to bishop suggests picturesque images which may tend to obscure the fact that Christ is the Consecrator every time. The idea of a chain, then, does not express the whole of the truth; but as far as it goes, it does not distort the truth. There is such a chain, and we cannot break continuity without impairing authority.

If our Lord really did divide His Church into

<sup>1</sup> He states that there is no reference to it in the Bull which condemned Anglican Orders (*op. cit.*, p. 266). But what in that case can be the meaning of saying that in 1661 "the hierarchy being extinguished, there was now no power of ordaining"? Quoted by Dr. Headlam, p. 251.

ministry and laity, and if He ordained (or even if His Apostles ordained) that the ministry should be self-propagating, is there not a real doubt as to new ministries which have not sprung from the original one ?<sup>1</sup>

*F. The Practice of the Roman Catholic Church.*

There is no need to attempt any criticism of Roman Catholic theories of the episcopate. The theologians of the Roman communion have never departed from St. Augustine's doctrine of sacramental grace, or from his doctrine of the indelible "character" of Holy Orders.<sup>2</sup> Nor is there any doubt in their minds that what is necessary for the valid conferring of Orders is (1) a bishop, (2) a baptised male subject, (3) a prayer or other formula expressive of the intention to confer some particular order, (4) the imposition of hands,<sup>3</sup> (5) the intention of doing what the Church intends to be done. This may sound cut-and-dried, but it is not really the worse for that; and it would be difficult to find any fault with its expression of what is required if we are to feel confidence in the ministerial character of any particular person.

The case is far otherwise with actual Roman Catholic practice in the matter of episcopal jurisdiction. There are, indeed, few things in which the Roman Church seems more open to criticism than the way in which the bishops have allowed their position to be undermined by the ever-growing aggrandisement of the

<sup>1</sup> The theory of the Apostolic succession, in the more modern sense of the term, is often stigmatised as "mechanical" and "materialistic." But Apostolic succession in this sense simply means the transmission of Apostolic authority, and there is nothing mechanical or materialistic in the idea either of "authority" or of "transmission." "Authority" is a purely spiritual conception, and its "transmission" is a personal and spiritual act.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine does not use the word "character," but his doctrine seems indistinguishable from that of the schoolmen.

<sup>3</sup> Historical research has compelled the abandonment of the idea of the necessity of the "porrection of the instruments."

Papacy. Most of the Papalist theologians would indeed allow that bishops exercise jurisdiction by "Divine right": the voice of the episcopate is the infallible voice of the Church: it would be difficult to exaggerate the authority which is assigned to the episcopal office in theory. But in actual practice the Roman bishop is little more than a delegate of the Apostolic see. He is usually appointed by the Pope, and in all cases his election must be confirmed by him. The bishop only exercises his jurisdiction on sufferance. He holds it as from the Pope who can limit it to any extent short of actual annihilation. He depends on Papal faculties at every turn, and must pay a visit to Rome every five years in order to receive permission to carry out the functions of his office. His vicar-general is a watch-dog of the Curia, and between Jesuits in his own entourage and elusive *monsignori* in Rome it must often seem as though his own Apostolic authority had been reduced to vanishing point. We are here faced with a real corruption and a degradation of the proper liberties of the episcopal office. Nor are the relations of the Roman Catholic bishop to his subordinates more ideal. If a bishop can always be suppressed by the Pope (or rather by one of the Roman Congregations), there is even less difficulty in dealing with an inconvenient priest. It is all part of a remarkably efficient system, but it is singularly different from the spirit of the primitive Church, or even of the Middle Ages. That, of course, is not in itself a condemnation. But it hardly seems an exaggeration to say that under the Papal jurisdiction the episcopate has ceased to be a great office. That, at least, is how the matter appears to those outside that jurisdiction. The whole thing seems all too like a machine. The bishop is a very important cog, but the motive power is all centralised in the bureaucracy of the imperial city.

## CHAPTER VII

### LESSONS FOR ANGLICANS

THE position of those who feel compelled to hold out for the necessity of episcopacy often seems like a hard, unyielding legalism, or even a mere unintelligent conservatism, or, still worse, a stiff and Pharisaic pride. It is therefore necessary to emphasise the fact that the principle of episcopacy is a flexible one, and that Anglicans are by no means so completely in love with the *status quo* as to make it impossible for them to conceive of any improvement in our present arrangements. In point of fact, there is probably no body of Christians anywhere who are so alive to the defects of their own traditions or so ready to learn from others. Certainly in the matter of episcopal government there are few indeed among them who would say that all was for the best in the best of all possible churches. Our system, as we have received it, is very far from ideal. What we want is not episcopacy as it is, but a reformed and constitutional episcopacy. It is no more than the truth to say that continuous progress is being made towards the attainment of this ideal, and that there is growing discontent with those features of Anglican episcopacy which are most at variance with it. We know that we have much to learn.

(a) We must be willing to learn from Roman Catholicism. In spite of what we have said as to the undermining of the power of the episcopate by the Papacy, it is well to be reminded that we ourselves are far from being able to show to the world a picture of a free and independent episcopate. In some ways

even the Papalist system is less open to criticism than our own. The change from Papalism was certainly not, in the first instance, a change in the direction of liberty, but a change from one tyranny to another, and that harsher and more imminent. There was much to be said in favour of a certain remote jurisdiction on the part of the Pope (though nothing whatever to be urged in favour of the way in which it had for the most part been exercised). But the forcible insistence on the supremacy of the Crown was in the first instance a giving rein to royal passions and aristocratic greed and a gross and heady nationalistic feeling. The subservience of Henrician and Elizabethan bishops, however excusable, was certainly not in the interests of the spiritual freedom of the Church. After all, the Pope was held to be the Vicar of Christ, and obedience to him could be painted in idealistic colours. But the King or Queen at best represented no one but the nation, and their untrammelled despotism was destructive of the Catholic, supranational spirit. Long after the days of real and effective royal tyranny the idea remained that the Crown had taken the place of the Pope as head of the Church,<sup>1</sup> and the submission of the clergy to Henry and Elizabeth left an evil legacy to the Church, first in an exaggerated theory of Divine right, then in a doctrine of passive obedience, and finally in the mere drab Erastian view of the Church of England as a department of the State, to be governed even in spiritual matters by laws passed through an increasingly secularised Parliament. To this indictment must be added a condemnation of our method of appointing bishops. Appointment by the *fiat* of a Henry or an Elizabeth was bad enough, but it did rest on a respectable theory. That bishops should

<sup>1</sup> This rather blasphemous title was, in fact, refused by Elizabeth and the official title has since been "Supreme Governor." But from popular thought the idea has never disappeared that the King is the head of the Church of England.

be locally chosen is a sound principle, and the transference of the choice from Pope to King was so far a step in the right direction. That the choice should rest with the King rather than with the diocese (or in theory that the King should claim the right of directing the choice of the diocese) was simply a piece of Casarism. The ruler was the only person who could be allowed to exercise a choice of such importance, and as he also happened to be the Lord's anointed, the unsuitability of the arrangement was less obvious. The canonical form of election by the cathedral chapter was still observed (though it was made almost farcical by the fact that failure to elect the nominee of the Crown made no difference to the result, since in that case he was to be imposed on the diocese by Letters Patent).

But now that the person who has the preponderant voice in the appointment is the Prime Minister, the position has really become unendurable.<sup>1</sup> For although the Prime Minister does represent the people of England in the matter of secular politics, the question of his ecclesiastical appointments is not considered by one in ten thousand voters. Indeed, it would be very unadvisable that anyone should vote for a parliamentary candidate on the ground that his political chief was likely to make better bishops than the leader of the opposite party. It therefore comes to this, that the appointment of bishops rests with that one of the three political leaders whose secular policy commended itself to the majority of the parliamentary electors at the last General Election. It is quite untrue to say that the people of England appoint

<sup>1</sup> It is true that on certain occasions, notably in the reign of Victoria, the Monarch's personal voice has been a determining factor in the appointment of a bishop. But there is no security for the occupant of the throne being a suitable person to make ecclesiastical appointments, nor is there any obvious reason why the Monarch's private religious views should be reflected in the hierarchy. It should be sufficient to mention that there was once such a person as James II.



their own bishops indirectly. They are not thinking about bishops at all when they give their votes! It would be as sensible to leave the matter in the hands of the governor of the Bank of England. That the Prime Minister does, as a matter of fact, take ecclesiastical advice, and usually acts on it, does not affect the principle. The fact that the power lies with him is an intolerable insult to religion.

It is not here contended that the State should have no say in the appointment of bishops. It is probably quite a good thing (so long as no serious opposition is raised against it from the secular side) that certain bishops should sit in the House of Lords. But obviously no self-respecting modern State would allow its secular legislature to be packed, in however small a degree, with a personnel over whose appointment it had no control. Justice demands that some scheme should be devised by which the consent of representatives of both Church and State should be required. The really logical plan would be to give the Prime Minister the right to advise the Crown not to issue a writ to summon to the Parliament any bishop who had been appointed in spite of his (the Prime Minister's) disapproval. But in view of the strong tradition in favour of giving the secular government (not in this country only)<sup>1</sup> an effective voice in the appointment of bishops, the plan of putting three names before the Prime Minister for his selection would probably prove tolerable.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is not generally known that even in Spain the consent of the Crown is required before a bishop can take possession of his see. The same was true of Italy until a few months ago.

<sup>2</sup> A committee of the Church Assembly appointed to consider the matter has recently issued a report which recommends that the chapter should no longer be liable to civil penalties for electing someone other than the nominee of the Crown, nor the Metropolitan for refusing to confirm or consecrate, and that the Prime Minister should be under a statutory obligation to consult a patronage board. All that can be said about these rather timid suggestions is that they are steps in the right direction.

Of course, the evil of the present system, great as it is, must not

In spite of the criticism to which the Roman system is liable, there are two things that the Roman Catholic bishop can never forget: that he is the organ of a world-wide Church, and that he wields an authority which is essentially independent of the State. Our own system of episcopacy would be the better for the constitutional recognition of these two facts. Circumstances have driven the English episcopate into a position of isolation from the rest of the Church. Until recently they were unable to initiate any ecclesiastical legislation at all, and so found themselves increasingly separated in outlook even from those other Anglican bishops across the border or over the seas with whom they were in the fullest communion, and compelled to look to outworn statutes of the realm as the final word on the laws of the Church. Even now they have more than once found themselves in the humiliating position of having their work thrown out by secular legislators on religious grounds. But the existence of the Church Assembly, however much it may be open to criticism as tending to overshadow the ancient Houses of Convocation, has at least brought back the legislative power of the Church into the region of possibilities. The days of mere waiting upon Parliament to initiate legislation on spiritual matters are over for ever, and the only reason why Parliament now comes into the matter at all is that there is a concordat between the Church and the State, by which the Church, in acknowledgment of the fact that she has a certain position of privilege,

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be exaggerated. In the case of an outrageous nomination, a cathedral chapter could force a crisis by refusing to elect, or an archbishop by refusing to confirm. No doubt the law would override their action, but the result would be an irresistible demand for disestablishment. Again, no power on earth can compel an archbishop to consecrate one whom he believes to be unworthy; and even though other bishops might be found subservient enough to usurp the archbishop's canonical place, it is probable that under such circumstances the diocese would refuse to recognise the bishop, and his position would become impossible.

forgoes her natural right of independent spiritual legislation. There is nothing derogatory in this, so long as it is clear that if occasion arises the Church will proceed with her task at all costs, and that if the State then chooses to disestablish her neither party will have cause for complaint.

We look, then, to the Anglican episcopate to complete the work, which it has certainly begun, of purging itself from provincialism and Erastianism. In the earlier days of the Catholic revival it was constantly necessary to remind our rulers that the English Church was, after all, only "two provinces of the Catholic Church." That, of course, is quite true, and even now it is sometimes in danger of being forgotten. But the development of interest in the Church overseas has to a very great extent taken the point out of this reproach. After all, the bishops do not usually act without any remembrance of the fact that the Anglican communion now consists of many provinces, and that in some ways the overseas provinces are more important than those at home. The Lambeth Conference itself has very largely removed the stigma of provincialism from the Anglican episcopate. Only, of course, the Catholic mind cannot be satisfied with this. If we claim to be a constituent member of the Catholic Church, unjustly cut off from communion with our fellow-Catholics, we cannot simply ignore the mind of the collective episcopate. It is not a mere question of majorities. The Anglican protest against Papal absolutism must continue, even though a majority of the Catholic bishops have surrendered to it. We believe that we have something to teach the whole Church in this matter. But, however true that may be, it is still the duty of the Anglican authorities, when faced with the need of deciding important matters, to consider how the question would present itself to the episcopate at large, supposing that we were not in this abnormal divided state. Such a

consideration would often transform a large majority of the Anglican episcopate into a small minority of the episcopate of the world. It would not follow that the minority was wrong, but a true sense of proportion would inevitably make some difference to their state of mind. They would remember that they were men compelled by conscience to differ from their brethren, and would be less likely to assume that those who found difficulties about their decision were merely tiresome faddists.

So, also, there are certain last trappings of Erastianism which still need to be shed. There is nothing essentially Erastian in the fact that the Church of England cannot, for instance, alter the Prayer-Book without the consent of the King as advised by Parliament. The fact that measures promoted by the Church Assembly are incapable of parliamentary amendment is a very definite assertion that in the last resort no one can dictate to the Church how she is to worship. But as long as the Church retains a privileged position in the State, there is nothing unreasonable in the State demanding to be kept informed of any changes which she proposes to make in her standard formularies, and saying in effect that if certain changes are made she will have to reconsider relations with a Church which has so altered its character. Only—and here is the point as regards the true spirit of episcopacy—the bishops must be prepared to make good their declaration that in vital matters they cannot abdicate their own spiritual authority. If the State chooses to reply by disestablishment, that cannot be helped.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is by no means intended to maintain that such would have been the proper course to pursue in the recent Prayer-Book difficulties. Had the proposed changes in the Prayer-Book had an enthusiastic and almost unanimous backing from the Church, no doubt the bishops would have been amply justified in proceeding to pass the new legislation by decree of Convocation. This would have been to repudiate the Henrician submission of the clergy, which forbids the promulgation of canons until they have received the

(b) Not, indeed, that disestablishment is the only remedy for the anomalous position of dependence on the State in spiritual matters in which the Church of England finds itself. In this matter we may learn from the status of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland that an established church may be accorded the fullest spiritual freedom with the good-will of the secular legislature. "This Church," so read the Articles declaratory of the constitution of the Church of Scotland in matters spiritual, "as part of the universal Church, wherein the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed a government in the hands of Church office-bearers, receives from Him, its Divine King and Head, and from Him alone, the right and power, subject to no civil authority, to legislate and to adjudicate finally in all matters of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline in the Church, including the right to determine all questions concerning membership and office in the Church, the constitution and membership of its courts, and the mode of election of its office-bearers. . . . The recognition by the civil authority of the separate and independent government and jurisdiction of this Church in matters spiritual . . . does not in any way affect the character of this government and jurisdiction as derived from the Head of the Church alone, or give the civil authority any right of interference with the proceedings and judgments of the Church within the sphere of its spiritual government and jurisdiction.

"This Church has the inherent right, free from interference by the civil authority . . . to declare the sense in which it understands its confession of faith, and to modify the forms of expression therein."

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Royal assent. The Government could hardly have failed to take up so conspicuous a challenge, and some form of disestablishment would have been inevitable. But, in fact, there was no such unanimity, and there were far too many sighs of relief when the measure was thrown out to make it possible to treat its rejection as the signal for a revolution.



So far from the Church owing allegiance to the State, "this Church maintains its historic testimony to the duty of the nation acting in its corporate capacity to render homage to God, to acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to be King over the nations, to obey His laws, to reverence His ordinances, to honour His Church, and to promote in all appropriate ways His Kingdom."

If it be asked whether the State has any safeguard against the Church entirely changing its own character and still claiming to be possessed of its property and to maintain its privileged position, the answer is to be found in the unchangeable character of Article I., which binds the Church of Scotland (1) to the Scottish Reformation, (2) to the Scriptures, (3) to "the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith founded thereupon."

Finally, lest it should be thought that all this is simply so much ecclesiastical tall talk, not to be taken too seriously, it must be remembered that there is on the statute book an Act which states that the Declaratory Articles are lawful, and that all statutes and laws, in so far as they are inconsistent with them, "are hereby repealed and declared to be of no effect."<sup>1</sup>

It must not, then, be argued that establishment deprives the bishops of their natural freedom as the governors of God's people in spiritual affairs. If the presbytery can be free, there can be no reason in the nature of things why the episcopate should not be free likewise. But the presbytery was willing to stake all on its essential claim to manage its own affairs. A time will probably come when the English episcopate will have to do likewise. It may be on the question of the appointment of bishops, it may be on a liturgical matter, it may be on the right to excommunicate for moral offences which are not condemned by civil law. It will then be necessary for

<sup>1</sup> Church of Scotland Act, 1921.



bishops to show the same courage and the same unanimity as has been displayed by the ministry of a Presbyterian church. Whether in all the circumstances they can expect the same success as has attended their northern neighbours is very doubtful. The Church of England is the object of deep suspicion at the present moment, and it is most unlikely that Parliament would consent to any alteration of status which would give the bishops greater liberty. Probably, therefore, it would be wiser not to press the matter with any undue haste. But at any moment a question may arise which will be a real test of the extent to which in the ultimate resort the Church of England is willing to go out into the wilderness for the sake of liberty.

All this is not foreign to the matter of episcopacy. For apart from the question of episcopal Ordination, it is probable that the greatest difficulty which some of the Free Churches at home would find in coalescing with the Church of England would be the fear that an established and episcopally governed church cannot be really free. The bishops seem to the Free Churches to be State officials: and just as it was chiefly to set at rest the scruples of the Free Church of Scotland that the Church of Scotland Act was passed, so it would be under any scheme of reunion in this country. It is impossible to conceive of Free Church bishops, such as were envisaged by the Lambeth ideals of 1920, consenting to receive appointments from the Prime Minister for the time being, or to allow Parliament to have any say whatever in the method by which the services of their people were to be conducted.

(c) One of the Lausanne reports<sup>1</sup> contains the following striking statement:

"In view of (1) the place which the episcopate, the councils of presbyters, and the congregation of

<sup>1</sup> Report of Section V.

the faithful, respectively, had in the constitution of the early Church, and (2) the fact that episcopal, presbyteral, and congregational systems of government are each today, and have been for centuries, accepted by great communions in Christendom, and (3) the fact that episcopal, presbyteral, and congregational systems are each believed by many to be essential to the good order of the Church, we therefore recognise that these several elements must all, under conditions which require further study, have an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited Church, and that each separate communion, recalling the abundant blessing of God vouchsafed to its ministry in the past, should gladly bring to the common life of the united Church its own spiritual treasures."

Is the episcopal principle really flexible enough to accommodate itself to such words as these? If we answer "Yes," it is important not to misunderstand what is suggested. The words do not mean that we could go on as a united Church, in which one part was episcopal, one presbyterian, and one congregational. "A ministry acknowledged in every part of the Church as possessing the sanction of the whole Church" means that all ministers shall have been ordained by bishops. There can be no doubt that this was the sense in which the words were interpreted at Lausanne. One speaker, an American Congregationalist, referred to this part of the fifth report as "a needless and almost unreasonable concession made to satisfy what, from the point of view of their people, was a prejudice founded upon nothing that could be found in the Scriptures, but to which they were willing to lend themselves, without negation, in order to further the cause of unity."<sup>1</sup> These words, rather unpromising as they are, have no meaning, unless it is acknowledged that unity without the episcopate is impossible.

<sup>1</sup> *Faith and Order*, pp. 380, 381.

What, then, is the meaning of the presbyteral and congregational elements having their "appropriate place" in the life of the Church? Can these words be accepted without overthrowing the nature of episcopal government?

(1) In regard to the presbyteral element there is really no difficulty at all. It would be quite possible to add the episcopate to the Presbyterian organisation and leave it almost untouched. The somewhat equivocal position of the ordained laymen known as elders would have to be defined. But that would be easy enough. There is no reason at all on any Catholic principle why lay Church councillors (as we should call them in the modern Church of England) should not be solemnly blessed by the parish priest with the laying on of his hands. It seems misleading to call it an Ordination, seeing that it is not claimed that the elder is anything but a layman: but this seems to be chiefly a matter of nomenclature, and, if so, could easily be adjusted.<sup>1</sup> Nor would any great difficulty arise about the theoretical claim that such an elder may celebrate Holy Communion. This probably occurs very seldom in practice, and moves the more conservative Presbyterian to strong protest. For presbyters to join the bishop in laying their hands on the newly ordained is already the custom of Catholic Christendom, even though we may not go so far as to say with John Duncan that "on an Ordination day all Christendom is Presbyterian."<sup>2</sup> Further, if it were desired there need be no insuperable objection to allowing all parish ministers to be consecrated to the episcopate, and the elders to the presbyterate. Such a course is most unlikely to be desired, least of all by the elders, but the point is merely that episcopacy is flexible enough, as a system, to admit of it,

<sup>1</sup> It is not probable that modern Presbyterians would lay stress on the theory that the position of a "ruling elder" corresponds to anything known to primitive Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> *Colloquia Peripatetica*, p. 75.

if it seemed more in harmony with the Presbyterian outlook. The position of the elders in regard to Church government would be more difficult to adjust with the traditional Catholic system of discipline. For "in counsel and in the government of the Church the minister and the lay elder have the same authority." So Dr. Macgregor<sup>1</sup> tells us: and he goes on in significant words to say that they are sometimes spoken of as belonging to the same Order with a difference of function. That seems inconsistent with the idea of the elder being a layman, and suggests that there is a desire in some quarters to identify him with the presbyter, in which case the minister must correspond to the bishop. Still, we have become used in the Church of England to laymen exercising considerable power in Church Councils, and the matter is probably capable of being arranged.

It looks as though the real point is that Presbyterianism would be asked to make up its mind whether "elder" was to be translated "presbyter," or merely "senior." A definite answer either way would make the Presbyterian system capable of coalescing with Catholicism.

In other respects a dash of Presbyterianism is perhaps a very desirable addition to an episcopal polity which sometimes tends to become prelatical. The episcopal system, if it works out in the form of few bishops retaining great and autocratic powers, tends to become official rather than paternal. The presbyterian element in Church government, if it were ever to be grafted into the episcopal, would not destroy episcopacy, but would either greatly increase the number of bishops or insist upon a considerable devolution of authority. In neither case would the essence of the episcopal system be touched.

(2) It is far more difficult to see how the congre-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. D. C. Macgregor in a lecture delivered at Blackheath in 1921.

gational element could rightly have its place in the life of the episcopal Church. There seems, indeed, at first sight to be some confusion of thought in the Lausanne statement. For the preamble speaks of the place which "the congregation of the faithful" had in the constitution of the early Church. But there is no sign that the congregation, in the sense of those who habitually worshipped in the same church building, had any organised existence in the early Church; and of the theory which lies at the basis of historical Congregationalism, that each "congregation" in this sense is independent of all other Christian bodies, there is no trace at all in early Church history. Does the Lausanne report merely mean (*a*) that the laity ought to have some voice in the management of Church affairs? If so, that might well be agreed: but that is not Congregationalism. If, on the other hand, it means (*b*) that each local congregation is to be theoretically independent of the rest of the Church, which is the real meaning of Congregationalism, it is difficult indeed to see how that could be combined with episcopacy.

If, then, the Lausanne report merely means that the laity ought to have some voice in Church affairs, the only question that arises is the proper adjustment between them and the episcopal and presbyteral Orders. To give the laity a more effective voice in deciding who are worthy to be ordained or consecrated is in the fullest accord with the best and most ancient Catholic tradition. It was a right which gradually lapsed in barbaric and feudal ages when the mass of the people were quite incompetent to form any judgment on such a matter, and when all similar rights were actually exercised by secular rulers. Thus it came about that the King had a commanding voice in the election of a bishop, while the acceptance of a priest for Ordination did not seem important enough to call for any positive exercise of the privi-

leges of the laity. Objection could always be made, no doubt; but, apart from questions which affected the civic rights of someone else, as, for instance, the case when the ordinand was not a freeman, it is probable that the matter was always left to the bishop and his archdeacons.

The question as to the rights of the laity in regard to the selection of a priest for the cure of souls is quite a different one. It brings in the "congregational" element in the other sense of the word. If it were claimed as a matter of principle that the congregation should appoint its minister in complete independence of the bishop, it would be necessary to resist the claim on the theoretical ground that the diocese and not the congregation is the ultimate unit. But if all that is meant is that it should elect its minister, it becomes a mere question of expediency, and there have always been instances of such legal rights of a parish. The private patron is in theory the secular local ruler who provides a priest on the same principle that the Crown provides a bishop. But the bishop, in addition to the actual grace of his Consecration, requires somehow an ecclesiastical grant of jurisdiction: and in the same way the priest, although already in Holy Orders, cannot receive the cure of souls except from the bishop. Principle would be satisfied if to election by the congregation there were added institution by the bishop. If, then, other matters having been satisfactorily adjusted, the Congregationalists desired union with ourselves on condition that they might continue to elect their own ministers, no objection need be offered. That, of course, is a very different matter from saying that this would be a desirable method of appointment. Under present circumstances it would probably be a good thing that those who habitually worship in a particular church building should have some say in the selection of their minister, but that is a very



different thing from giving the congregation the right to vote for and engage him. This may not be absolutely contrary to principle, but it would be very difficult for a minister so appointed to maintain his proper spiritual authority. Almost inevitably it seems as though his ministry would come to be thought of in terms of engagement to serve, rather than of authority to speak in the name of God.

But the rights of the laity in general are not confined to a voice in the selection of candidates for the sacred ministry or of ministers for a particular appointment. To attempt to discuss such a matter in detail would be to wander away from our consideration of episcopacy: but the general principle is surely clear. The bishops acting, not as individuals, but as the bishops of the Church, are the supreme authority. But in matters in which either presbyters or laity as such are presumed to be competent to judge it is right and proper that they should be consulted. There is ample precedent for asserting the constitutional right of both presbyters and laity to be consulted in all matters which affect them. St. Cyprian, the great champion of the rights of the individual bishop, made it a principle "to do nothing without the advice of the clergy and the concurring feeling<sup>1</sup> of the laity." But those who are not Congregationalists have a certain suspicion, perhaps unjustified, that Congregationalism sometimes works out like an ecclesiastical Soviet system, under which the minister is really under lay discipline. Anything of this sort seems to us as contrary to natural justice as that presbyters should control their bishops or private soldiers their officers. However this may be, it is certainly quite contrary to the traditions of the Church.

The question of the right of the laity to be consulted

<sup>1</sup> The Bishop of Moray and Ross points out in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* that *consensus* cannot possibly mean "consent," since this would be to assign to the laity a power of vetoing the bishop's decision, while the clergy were restricted to giving advice.

on doctrinal and liturgical questions is not easy. Certainly they were present at all manner of councils in the early Church, ecumenical and otherwise. True they had no vote at the council itself; but, on the other hand, their opinion had weight in determining the subsequent acceptance of the council by the Church as a whole. This applies to doctrinal matters as well as disciplinary, and also to the primarily liturgical question of the use of sacred images in worship, which was the occasion of the seventh Ecumenical Council.

But, of course, this does not mean that the laity are competent to take the place of the Apostolic teachers of the Church. If it is true of the bishops that their primary function as teachers is to testify to tradition, this is even more true of the laity. However blindly this may be done, and however recent the traditions may sometimes be, the natural conservatism of the lay mind is, on the whole, a valuable asset of the Church. It is the business of theologians to develop theology, of bishops to accept or reject the developments; but it is the not unimportant function of the general body of the laity to wish to be *convinced* of them. Thus the teaching function of bishops and of presbyters, though authoritative, is never oracular, and should aim at being persuasive. Docility is no doubt a virtue, but docility does not mean a readiness to swallow anything; and it has proved only too easy to draw an over-sharp distinction between *docens* and *discens* as attributes of two separate parts of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the Roman view the Pope and the bishops are *ecclesia docens*: all others are *ecclesia discens*. This does not mean, however, that presbyters are not to teach, and to teach authoritatively in the name of Christ and His Church, but that their teaching authority is dependent on the world-wide ministry of the episcopate.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHAT THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION HAS TO OFFER

WE have spoken of lessons for Anglicans. But there is another side to the matter. It is our duty to criticise others, and also to learn from them. But it may also be hoped that we may be able to make some contribution to the idea of ministry in the ultimately reunited Church, in whatever order the stages of reunion may actually take place.

(a) It may seem strange to speak of the *contribution* of the Anglican communion to the Roman type of Catholicism, when the Roman mind, even at its most liberal, could hardly conceive of itself as needing anything that a schismatical communion could supply. Certainly in regard to a possible reunion at some future date we must disabuse our minds of any idea of the Roman Catholic Church, as it now is, welcoming within itself an alien body, and incorporating into itself some features in which it was itself hitherto lacking. The whole genius of contemporary Romanism is opposed to any such idea. Reunion with Rome could only take place as the result of a considerable change on both sides of the barrier which now divides us. If that change ever does take place in the Roman Church, she will already have adopted, in regard both to the ministry and to many other things, certain characteristics in which we may presume to think that we can show the more excellent way. For no reunion is possible until something has been done to rectify the frontier between Papal and episcopal jurisdiction, and when that has been satisfactorily done there will be little further fault to find with the Roman Catholic theory of the ministry. All the same, in one sense we should have made our con-

tribution: for the change which *ex hypothesi* would have taken place in the Roman attitude would probably owe something to the continual criticism of Papalism from a Catholic point of view which has been characteristic of some of our Anglican controversialists. What seems to us intolerable is that the President of the Episcopal College, even though he may hold the presidency by Divine right, should have so absorbed all authority into himself that the government of the Church has become an autocracy. This is the scandal which has seemed to us to justify even the extreme step of declining the Papal jurisdiction altogether, until the day when it once more allows its authority to be balanced by that of the original and authentic governing body of the Church, which is not the Curia, but the episcopate. If that ever does happen, the Anglican protest will have been justified, and in that sense the Anglican contribution will have been made.

(b) In regard to the Eastern Churches, whether Orthodox or separated, there is little to be added to what has been already said. We should both be the better for appreciating more clearly the other's attitude towards validity of Orders. If, as we have seen, there is a certain danger of our thinking that so long as formal validity of Orders and sacraments is secured nothing else very much matters; yet, on the other hand, the Western distinction between validity and regularity does make for the clear apprehension of the fact that the sacraments are not the private possession of the Church, but the direct gift of our Lord Himself. For from this it follows that a sacrament may be irregularly administered and yet quite validly received, and that if the irregularity is either unintentional or inevitable, then *ex opere operato*—i.e., from the mere fact that the rite has been carried out—the action is within the covenant.

(c) Finally, we must ask what we have to give to the non-episcopal communities.

It is easy to answer "the episcopate." But this is a little too simple. While there is no need to enquire too closely what any of the separated communities would mean by accepting episcopacy, or to press for consent to any particular view of the meaning of Apostolic succession, about which it is notorious that we differ among ourselves, there is no getting away from the fact that a bishop means a person with specific authority to ordain, and that doubts may be fairly and honestly raised about the status of those who have been ordained by anyone who is not a bishop. A man so ordained might be perfectly satisfied with his own ministerial position, and yet be willing to accept episcopal Ordination. In that case his action would imply that he recognised that there were people who were not satisfied with the authority which lay behind his ministrations. For such a man to accept episcopal Ordination would be an act of great charity and of great humility. Yet, after all, charity and humility are Christian virtues; and there does not seem anything outrageous in maintaining that if this question of validity of Orders is the only thing which stands between two bodies of Christians, it cannot at least be wrong for those whose ministry is questioned to set themselves right with the others by having their ministry put as far beyond question as the nature of the case admits.

But, of course, we should not wish any group of ministers to submit themselves to episcopal Ordination with, as it were, a shrug of the shoulders, as though it were a mere concession to other people's unreasonable prejudices. They would themselves naturally feel that acceptance of episcopal Ordination on such terms was almost a sacrilege. Episcopacy must stand in their minds for something important, even though they may not be convinced that it is vital. This much at least episcopacy must mean, that the historical Jesus founded the ministry, and that it

is given to men by the authoritative action of the Church. If the ministry is a grace-gift bestowed directly on the minister, and merely recognised by a particular congregation or by a group of ministers, then insistence on episcopal Ordination is meaningless, and ought to be resisted. Episcopal Ordination on any theory stands for the principle that the ministry is indubitably given *by Christ through* someone empowered by Him to bestow it. A man may perhaps hold a theory, like that of Dr. Headlam, that any Christian who uses the Apostolic rite of the imposition of hands may validly make a minister, even though he is not a minister himself. Such a man might reasonably submit to episcopal Ordination on the ground that he himself recognised that his previous Ordination was irregular, and many people thought it also invalid. But if he really thought that his ministrations were valid simply because he was personally convinced that God intended him for the ministry, and that his Ordination, if he received it, was a mere ecclesiastical licence to do the work to which God had called him, he ought surely to decline anything so suggestive of the conferring of a gift as Ordination by a bishop. If this argument is sound it would seem as though there were no reason in the nature of things why any Methodist or Presbyterian should not consent to have his ministry put beyond the reach of reasonable cavil by accepting episcopal Ordination, but that a consistent Congregationalist or Baptist or Quaker or Salvationist is really precluded by his own principles from doing so. For on Congregationalist principles, as voiced by that most learned, liberal and generous Congregationalist, Dr. Garvie, "Ordination is the corporate recognition of the grace-gift, investing with the authority of the Church the exercise of that gift within the Christian community." The Baptist polity is identical with the Congregationalist, and in this matter of the ministry



there is probably no difference between them. But there is no form of episcopal Ordination known in the Catholic Church which is really susceptible of this interpretation. The form may be imperative, like "Receive the Holy Ghost," or impetrative according to the more primitive models : but it always implies that something then and there happens to the man to make him what he was not before.<sup>1</sup> The recognition theory really calls for some quite different ceremony as its natural expression. It is not surprising that in many cases there seems to be no imposition of hands at a Congregationalist Ordination, but the totally different, and equally expressive, ceremony of the giving of the right hand of fellowship.

In the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army there is no theory of the ministry at all.

But perhaps the real answer to our question, What

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Ordination prayer of Bishop Serapion, "Let a Divine Spirit come to be in him that he may be able to be a steward of Thy people and an ambassador of Thy Divine oracles." Quoted by Dr. Headlam, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 252. The following is the form of the "Egyptian Church Order," the most ancient formula of Ordination which we possess :

"O God . . . who knowest all things before they come to pass, who hast set bounds in Thy Church by the word of Thy grace, who . . . didst establish princes and priests, and didst never leave Thy sanctuary without a ministry : Thou who from the beginning of the world hast been pleased to be glorified in those whom Thou hast chosen : pour out now the power that is of Thee, the princely Spirit which Thou gavest to Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, which He bestowed on Thy holy Apostles, who founded the Church in every place, Thy sanctuary . . . grant to this Thy servant whom Thou hast chosen for the office of a bishop, that he may feed Thy holy flock, and may serve blamelessly as chief priest before Thee . . . and may make propitiation before Thy face, and may offer Thee the gifts of Thy holy Church, and in the spirit of the chief priesthood may have authority to remit sins according to Thy command, to appoint clergy according to Thine ordinance, to loose every bond according to the authority which Thou gavest to the Apostles, and may please Thee in meekness and purity of heart, offering Thee an odour of sweet savour" (Dr. Gore's translation).

St. Paul, it will be remembered, seems to define the grace of Holy Order as "power, and love, and discipline," and to assert unequivocally that this grace is really given through the imposition of Apostolic hands (2 Tim. i. 6, 7).

is the gift that we are offering to non-episcopalians who wish to join with us? is one which they themselves might not recognise at first as corresponding to their own aspirations. The one thing which all the great leaders of the Protestant Reformation agreed in was that there was no Christian Altar except the Cross, and no Christian priesthood except that of our Lord. There is, of course, a sense in which these statements could be accepted by all Christians, but the Catholic Church from the beginning has held that in one sense or another the Eucharist is sacrificial, and from a very early period has described those who presided at it as priests. The Reformers had good reasons for feeling doubtful about the doctrine of the Eucharistic sacrifice as it was commonly taught in the Church of the sixteenth century, and we certainly cannot be too glib in blaming them for questioning the popular and semi-official teaching of the period: but it remains true that in leaving the authorised ministries of the Church (in the case of the Lutherans much against their own will) they also forsook any idea of a sacrificing priesthood. Now, if it be true that the first and most sacred duty of the Christian minister of the first ages, whether bishop or presbyter, was to lead in a worship which was recognised as sacrificial, and if the setting up of new ministries, outside any kind of Apostolic succession, is historically associated with the rejection of the idea of priesthood altogether, it does not seem unnatural to hold that the greatest thing which is lacking to the non-episcopal ministry is something which few indeed of the holders of that ministry would wish to claim—a ministerial priesthood. The vast majority of the ministers of the Catholic Church have claimed continuously that they were given by Divine authority the privilege of exercising, as the members of Christ's Body specially set apart for the purpose, the priestly functions which belong to that Body as a whole. It

is this which most completely differentiates the Catholic priesthood from every other form of ministry. Those among the episcopally ordained who do not believe in any such function as being part of their ministry do not in fact see much to distinguish it from that of those ordained in some other way. But the overwhelming majority, thinking of themselves primarily as priests, are conscious of a completely different outlook. To them the fact that they are the commissioned representatives of the Church Godward is all-important: and while they readily recognise that grace may be given by the free power of God through any ministry which He condescends to use, they are persuaded that the Godward action of the Church's worship requires as a necessity a Divinely constituted priesthood. "We hold," says Dr. Armitage Robinson, "that the Eucharist of the Church is more than a means of grace for the individual believer, and was from the end of the first century, at any rate, primarily regarded as an Offering of Thanksgiving to God . . . an offering which could only be duly made by the authorised minister of the Church. In other words, there can be no due celebration of the Holy Eucharist without a priest." "The episcopate has never been conceived as merely forming a framework of organisation."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Dr. R. J. Campbell has stated that his primary reason for seeking episcopal Ordination was the need of the Altar.

<sup>1</sup> Prefatory note to a sermon on the Apostolic succession.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SPIRITUAL VALUE OF THE CATHOLIC CONCEPTION OF HOLY ORDERS

It is somewhat discouraging to remember how many people there are who think that our whole subject is hardly worth discussion. "The discussion of the validity of a ministry makes me yawn," said Mr. Stanley Jones in a recent lecture, and there is no doubt that the examination of credentials in this matter of the ministry is to many minds the sheerest waste of time.

It may be well, therefore, to conclude our study by an attempt to show the spiritual principles involved in the maintenance of a continuous and successive ministry. Such a ministry stands for the truth that our Lord's plan for the salvation of the world was the mission of consecrated men. The doctrine of the ministry is at least in line with our Lord's method in that respect. The Apostles were *sent*: the early missionaries were *sent*: the first ministers of the Church were men with a commission. In some cases that was a direct commission from Christ or from the Holy Ghost; in other cases from the authority which Christ had appointed in the Church. The Apostles were sent by Christ; the Prophets by the Holy Ghost; the presbyters by the Apostles. So also at the present day it is the Apostolic and historic ministry of the bishops which most clearly expresses the fact of mission. No doubt this still leaves room for the extraordinary missions of the Holy Ghost. When an inspired and prophetic preacher arrives on the scene, no one ought to wish to put him to silence. But on any showing this is an exceptional event. It will

hardly be maintained that every minister is *ex officio* an inspired prophet.

Nor must we make too sharp a distinction between the prophetic and the priestly offices. The prophets of the Apostolic age seem to have had liturgical as well as priestly functions. It was a group of "prophets and teachers" who ministered to the Lord at Antioch, and the "giving of thanks" at Corinth seems to have been conducted either by a prophet or some still more ecstatic personage. There is nothing, therefore, to cause great surprise in the fact, if it is a fact, that the celebrant in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* is still a "prophet." A special inspiration was perhaps thought to qualify for the liturgical as well as for the preaching office. It might therefore be argued that the authorities of the Church could again permit the celebration of the Eucharist by a prophet, supposing that it pleased God to renew the prophetic line. Whether it would be a wise course is another matter. The prophets at Antioch were under the presidency of an Apostolic delegate, St. Barnabas, but we need go no further down the stream of history than the period of the Corinthian disorders to see the result of allowing prophecy to hold the dominant position. We may well suppose, with Dr. Streeter,<sup>1</sup> that Corinth taught St. Paul a lesson, and suggested to him that the "helps" and "governments" to which he assigned such a lowly place in his list of spiritual offices were really a far more satisfactory nucleus for the future ministry of the Church than the ecstatic fellowship of the prophets. Moreover, the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* itself, to say nothing of the Montanist movement, seems to bear witness to the fact that it is one thing to claim prophetic inspiration and quite another to make good the claim. We cannot rely upon or even expect a continuous supply of prophets, for prophecy is a torrent which cannot be turned into a canal.

<sup>1</sup> *The Primitive Church*, pp. 80, 81.

It is, of course, quite true that there may have been what we might call a pre-Apostolic Christianity in certain places. There were Christians in Damascus when the Apostles were still tarrying in Jerusalem. Antioch was evangelised by men of Cyprus and Cyrene who had, so far as we know, no specific Apostolic mission. It is not certain by what means Christianity first found its way to Rome. In the case of these embryonic Churches we really know very little of their worship or their organisation. For the former they probably depended very largely on the local synagogue, and for the latter they had to await the coming of someone with authority. But under whatever auspices the Christian religion first found its way to any region of the world, there is never any doubt about their complete subjection to the Apostolic authority when at last it did extend itself to them. All the evidence we have, and it is manifold, shows us the permanent ministry as a thing set in order by the Apostles or their delegates. The organisation of the Church and its ministry was by no means a matter of indifference. Whether it is Paul or John or Peter or James, so far as the evidence goes they did not content themselves with preaching, but also arranged for the government of the new community and for the continuity of that government. There is really nothing to put on the other side at all. It is no doubt difficult to prove the exact origin of episcopacy in all places, but that the early Church ministry was an organised ministry, and that the present Catholic ministry grew directly out of that primitive organisation, can be shown to demonstration. It is neither childish nor pedantic, therefore, to see in our episcopal Order and in the Orders that depend upon it a true continuation of the authority with which our Lord endued His first representatives among men. This is not for a moment to deny either Christian holiness, or learning, or pastoral and homiletic ability to other ministries : it is not to deny the



presence of the prophetic gift, if and when it makes itself known : it is hardly to deny anything which most non-episcopalians would claim for their ministry. All it denies is the Apostolic authority, and the right to exercise the Christian priesthood. If the former is unnecessary or unattainable and the latter a fiction, then the non-episcopal ministry is as valid as any other.

But let us throw ourselves back in imagination to the first generation of the Church. Let us suppose ourselves, *e.g.*, to be Cypriote islanders. We have received the first teachings of Christianity by means of refugees who left Jerusalem after the martyrdom of St. Stephen. We have learned from them of the Messiahship of Jesus, of His Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension ; of the coming of the Holy Ghost ; of Baptism and the laying on of Apostolic hands ; of the need of faith and repentance ; of judgment committed to the Son and of the general resurrection of the dead. To accept this teaching has enabled us to bear the name of disciples. Our new teachers have perhaps baptised us, or perhaps, on the other hand, it is more likely that they would have felt that any act so authoritative could only be performed by someone who bore office in the Church. With what gratitude should we regard them ! With what earnestness should we try to put their teaching into practice ! We might even be of the number of those whose zeal was so great as to impel them to imitate our own first teachers by ourselves bringing the good news to the great Gentile city of Antioch. But our gratitude to our first teachers would be quite a different sentiment from the reverence we should feel for St. Barnabas when he came to Antioch as a delegate from the Apostles themselves, or for St. Paul and St. Barnabas when they came as missionaries to our native island. The same contrast might be drawn between those Jews of the Dispersion, who probably

were the means of first bringing the Gospel to Rome, and St. Peter or St. Paul, whichever of these was actually the first Apostle to visit the capital of the Empire.<sup>1</sup>

Or we may go on to the second generation, when there is no longer any question of the Apostles themselves founding new Churches. All the Apostles, except perhaps St. John, are dead; but the Apostolic Church is still in existence, and its ministry is the Apostolic ministry. Consider once more St. Clement's appeal to the Corinthian Church, and see to what an extent it depends on the fact that those who have appointed the Corinthian presbyter-bishops are either Apostles or those who have received Apostolic authority to do so. How immeasurably weaker would have been his case if he had only been able to appeal to the "approval of the whole Church" (*i.e.*, of course, the whole Corinthian Church) to a "blameless ministry" and a "good report," and not also to appointment by those whose authority to appoint was either directly or indirectly Apostolic. If their position depended simply on human approval it might be fairly assumed that those who had approved might come to disapprove, and that those who had the power of appointment had also the power of dismissal. But St. Clement with great confidence asserts that an arbitrary expulsion of presbyters is "no small sin."

Certainly the choice of the people is important. Undoubtedly on Catholic principles no bishop should be thrust upon his flock against their wishes, and if any means could be devised by which the laity could have a more real voice in the approval of candidates for Holy Orders than they now possess, it would be to the good. But there is all the difference in the world

<sup>1</sup> This line of thought was suggested to the writer by a sermon preached by the Rev. M. G. Haigh at the Consecration of the present Bishop of Chichester.

between our attitude to one whose ministry depends on human choice alone (even though we may hope that we are choosing one whom God has already chosen), and our attitude to the same man when our choice has been ratified by that of the divinely appointed rulers of the Church, and when they have sent him forth endowed with the spiritual authority entrusted to the ministry by our Lord and His Apostles. When once he has been so sent forth, all question of his fitness for the work becomes secondary. It is not because of his own holiness that we accept him as our bishop, or as one of our presbyters. No man's holiness is sufficient for these things. "Our sufficiency is of God." "Neither is he that planteth anything nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." "Ye are *God's* husbandry, ye are *God's* building." There is no meaning in the Catholic insistence on valid Ordination except acknowledgment of human weakness and dependence upon Divine power.

## APPENDIX

### A NOTE ON THE RECENTLY PROPOSED SCHEME OF UNION BETWEEN CERTAIN DIOCESES OF THE CHURCH OF INDIA, BURMA, AND CEYLON, THE SOUTH INDIA UNITED CHURCH, AND THE SOUTH INDIA PROVINCIAL SYNOD OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH.

THE subject of this book is episcopacy, not reunion. But it would be disingenuous not to acknowledge that the chief reason for seeking to emphasise episcopal principles at the present moment is the fear that they are in danger of being jeopardised by a particular plan for union between a group of Anglican dioceses and certain non-episcopal communities in Southern India. It therefore seems advisable (1) to give a short résumé of the plan in question; (2) to point out the difficulties which seem to be involved in the acceptance of it.

It is desired to deal with the matter in the most friendly and sympathetic spirit. No one can be unmoved by the plea of the Indian Christians that European disputes between Christians are not of their making, and that they have no wish to be involved in them. They do not desire to be members of the Church of England, but of the Church of Christ; and they see no reason why different groups of Christians, who are not separated from each other by any vital differences of doctrine, should not communicate together.

At this point it is obvious that we come up against a difficulty inherent in the comprehensiveness of the Anglican communion. There are those in that communion who do not believe that an episcopally ordained priest is necessary to the validity of

the Consecration of the Holy Eucharist ; and those who do so believe have no wish, as a rule, to make that belief a test of orthodoxy. No one, that is to say, wishes to excommunicate those who do not hold it. Further, it so happens that Anglican Churchmen in the dioceses chiefly concerned do not, for the most part, hold this belief. This applies both to Indians and to the English missionaries. Nothing, therefore, could be more natural than for them to wish to put an end, as soon as may be, to a condition of disunion, which from that point of view has no justification whatever. On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that the belief in the necessity of episcopacy is a legitimate view in the Anglican communion, and that the formularies and the almost invariable practice of that communion uphold it. Therefore, any official action which plainly implies that an episcopally ordained ministry is non-essential is unjust to those who have hitherto belonged to the Anglican communion in the belief that its official teaching and practice insisted on it. That is the difficulty, and it is a very real one.

The following is an outline of the scheme by which the Joint Committee of the three bodies involved hope to solve it.

The doctrinal basis of union is (*a*) the historic faith in the Incarnation and the Trinity ; (*b*) the Bible ; (*c*) the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds ; (*d*) the reality of the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist as means of grace ; (*e*) a view of the ministry which can fairly be called sacramental.

The united Church is to be governed by bishops duly consecrated.

From the moment at which reunion takes place all ministers of the three uniting bodies "shall be acknowledged as ministers of the Word and of the sacraments in the united Church" without any further Ordination.

"The united Church must be an autonomous Church and free from any control." (This position is slightly modified by subsequent clauses.)

The united Church will seek to be in full communion with the Anglican communion and with all Churches with which the other component bodies are at present in communion.

"None of the ministers or members of the united Church shall, because of the union, forgo any rights with regard to intercommunion or intercelebration which they possessed before the union."

"The united Church shall . . . respect the conscientious convictions of its ministers and members."

"The uniting Churches agree that it is their intention and expectation that eventually every minister exercising a permanent ministry will be an episcopally ordained minister."

After a "period of thirty years, the united Church will consider and decide the question of . . . exceptions to the general principle of an episcopally ordained ministry."

No provision is made for Confirmation: but as an interim arrangement admission to Communion shall be granted either by Confirmation or by one of the methods previously in use in the non-episcopal Churches.

The arrangements for the election and Consecration of bishops and for the selection and Ordination of presbyters are satisfactory from the Catholic standpoint: but there seems to be a curious provision for a temporary diaconate to be conferred without imposition of hands in addition to the Order of deacon conferred by the bishop in the usual way.

A skeleton Communion Service is embodied in the scheme, to which no great exception can be taken.

It is clear that the scheme as it stands at present is quite definitely unacceptable to the majority of those who hold Catholic principles. It is, however, still in a tentative stage, and is only now ready for



presentation to the Provincial Synod of the Church of India, Burma, and Ceylon, and to the governing bodies of the other communions concerned. It is therefore not too late to hope that amendments may be made in it.

1. There is now no security whatever that groups of hitherto Anglican communicants may not have assigned to them as their pastor one who has had no Ordination from a bishop. At the Bangalore Conference held in June, 1928, there was a provision that this could only happen if no communicant objected, while the bishop's consent was also necessary before such an arrangement could be made permanent. This in itself seems contrary to Catholic principle. A strong committee of Anglo-Catholic scholars asserted in reference to it that the Anglican communion's "power of holding together in the future depends on the observance of" the rule that only the episcopally ordained may minister as bishop, priest, or deacon. But the scheme, as approved in 1929, has swept even this provision away, and substituted language of the vaguest description about "conscientious convictions" and "unchristian rigidity." It must be further observed that, even after the thirty years which is assigned as a transition period, the united Church is to be free to make exceptions, and that in any case the rule is not to be insisted on in the case of a temporary charge.

2. Apart from the practical question of non-episcopal ministers being put in charge of episcopalian congregations, there is the analogous doctrinal statement that such ministers "shall be acknowledged as ministers of the Word and the sacraments." It is extraordinarily difficult for Catholic-minded members of the Anglican communion not to feel themselves compromised by entering into union with a church which makes this affirmation. We have no wish to stand in the way of their ministering to their own

people, but the statement that they are ministers of "the sacraments" seems to be a definite statement that those who insist on episcopal Ordination as necessary for the consecrator of the Eucharist are in error.

3. The question of Confirmation seems to be burked. It would perhaps be impossible to insist on the immediate application of a rule of universal Confirmation. But it is very difficult indeed to think of a religious body as a component member of the Catholic Church when we have no assurance that Confirmation will be regularly administered, and where it seems to be made parallel the disciplinary action of admission to Holy Communion.

It is probably too late now to speak of asking the non-episcopal ministers to seek episcopal Ordination. They would certainly decline to do so, and the suggestions made at an earlier stage in the negotiations were so unsatisfactory that it would have been impossible to tell whether such Ordination was valid or not.

Perhaps, however, an alteration in the declared scope of the scheme might still be possible. The defenders of the scheme insist that the union is not a single act but a process. If, then, it were made clear that no real union will be achieved until all the ministers have a status which is beyond cavil, it might still be possible to proceed without offence to conscience. In that case it would be acknowledged that all that was possible at the moment was a close federation. But all new ministers would, as under the present scheme, receive episcopal Ordination in preparation for the day when final union would be possible. Externally the plan need not be altered very drastically. The three communions could be under a joint provisional government, without coercive authority. But the non-episcopal communions would be gradually receiving a valid ministry under the same doctrinal and liturgical safeguards as are at present proposed.

Whether these safeguards are really sufficient is not yet perhaps quite clear. New evidence seems to be forthcoming, which suggests that the standards of the South India United Church are more fundamentally, even more exclusively, Protestant than we in England had imagined. We are accustomed to a church which contains within itself both the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament and the Church Association, and neither body, it may be hoped, really wishes to excommunicate the other. But each of these is bound by Anglican doctrinal and liturgical standards, however differently they may interpret them. Whether we ought to enter into full union with a church which professedly sets up a standard which is doctrinally different is quite another matter: and although complete liturgical uniformity is neither desired nor desirable, it is startling to be informed at this stage in the proceedings that we shall have no security in Eucharistic worship for what the Lambeth Conference called "the unfailing use . . . of the elements ordained" by Christ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See passages quoted by Dr. Gore from the Church Members' Manual of the South India United Church in the *Church Times* of September 27, 1929.

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